



2016 - a year in review

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the PTUA was held at Ross House on 13 October, with approximately 50 members present.

This year's AGM marked the 40th anniversary of the PTUA, which began as the Train Travellers Association in 1976. It was therefore fitting that this year's Paul Mees Award, for outstanding contribution to public advocacy and activism on behalf of public transport, went to Dr John Stone.

John's association with public transport activism reaches back many years, to campaigns by Environment Victoria and the PTUA in the 1990s on causes such as clean air and environmental protection, opposition to major road projects, and saving the Upfield line from closure.

John was a long-standing colleague of Paul Mees both academically and in community campaigns, and in 2008 completed a PhD on "Political factors in the rebuilding of mass transit".

We were honoured that Paul Mees' wife Erica was in attendance to present the award to John.

The year 2016 has been challenging for the PTUA as we refocus our campaigning to recognise both the ongoing need for strong positive advocacy on public

transport solutions, and the clear threat posed by major road projects led by the Western Distributor.

Though a major community campaign was successful in stopping the East West Link two years ago, this and other damaging projects are far from politically dead. The campaign for superior public transport alternatives to roads will continue to absorb our energy and funds, and the Association is committed to strengthening this campaign in 2017 and in the leadup to the 2018 State election.

The PTUA took the opportunity at the AGM to farewell outgoing Committee members Berish Bilander and Ian Hundley, and acknowledge their important contributions.

An important milestone for the Association in 2016 was the inauguration of the Ballarat branch, which will work for improved public transport in Ballarat and western Victoria more generally. We welcome

branch convenor Ben Lever, who joins our Committee in an ex officio position alongside Geelong branch convenor Paul Westcott. Details of Ballarat branch meetings can be found on pages 2 and 5 of this newsletter.



Dr. John Stone, recipient of the 2016 Paul Mees Award, with Erica Cervini.

PTUA office

Ross House,
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
e-mail: office@ptua.org.au

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

Membership Enquiries

E-mail the office (see above).

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki passes – see www.ptua.org.au/members/offers

Committee

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

Michael Bell
Daniel Bowen
Anna Morton
David Robertson
Bruce Sutherland
Jennifer Williams

Geelong Branch:
Paul Westcott – Convenor

Ballarat Branch:
Ben Lever – Convenor

Member meetings

Melbourne:

Meetings will be advertised in PTUA News and on our website
www.ptua.org.au

Geelong:

First Saturday of every month (except January), 10:30am
Mary MacKillop Room, St Mary's Parish Offices, cnr. Little Myers and Yarra streets, Geelong

Ballarat:

Second Thursday of each month (except January), 7pm
Freight Bar, corner Mair and Peel Streets

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Edited by Anna Morton.

Newsletter contributors - Daniel Bowen, Ben Lever, Tony Morton, Paul Westcott.

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*Season's
Greetings to
all our
members.*

Infrastructure Victoria report - a PTUA perspective.

Victoria's "Draft 30 Year Infrastructure Strategy" was released in October by Infrastructure Victoria (IV), the agency created by the Andrews Government to advise on infrastructure development (covering not only transport but also health, water, housing and other public works).

The draft strategy contains many useful recommendations but, at this early stage, also reflects much of the 'business as usual' thinking that permeates the State bureaucracy. The following is an edited extract of PTUA's submission responding to the Strategy, which suggests ways in which IV might assert its independence more clearly in the public interest.

Good transport projects address infrastructure demands and challenges, community amenity, improved access and efficiency of movement for people and freight, and environmental sustainability.

When they make a positive contribution to meeting these needs, the recommended initiatives will help achieve IV's broader objectives.

However, the proposed expansion of urban motorways is more likely to have the opposite effect: making it more difficult to meet demand for movement of people and goods in 30 years' time and beyond; discouraging physical activity; destroying urban amenity and accessibility; increasing travel times for people and freight compared with alternative measures; degrading natural environments; failing to reduce carbon emissions; and further

degrading the resilience of our cities and critical systems.

Accordingly, we strongly disagree with IV's recommendations for the following on the basis that they will contribute negatively to IV's needs and objectives:

- Eastern Freeway–CityLink–Western Ring Road corridor preservation (EWW/EWE)
- North East Link (NEL)
- Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR)

These conclusions follow from plain empirical study of the consequences of analogous projects in Melbourne and in other cities around the world, from which planners over the past four decades have gleaned the near-universal 'Law of Congestion': that additions to road capacity do not relieve congestion on parallel routes, and generally worsen congestion on other routes that feed them, meaning that any travel time savings are transitory and evaporate after a small number of years.

The Strategy itself claims to accept this well-documented principle, asserting for example that "Victoria can't build its way out of congestion", and yet it claims—even on the same page—that new motorway projects are strongly justified on the basis of travel time savings. The Victorian public, and planners working both within and outside IV, are owed a better account of this apparent contradiction. Based on a long history in Victoria of confident predictions of travel time savings and congestion relief from motorway construction that were never realised in practice, we

submit that the discrepancy arises from on one hand a flawed technical methodology for modelling traffic effects, and on the other a tendency for modelling inputs to be formulated in an opaque process that can be influenced more by prior convictions of powerful 'insiders' than by transparent, publicly agreed assumptions.

The same methodological and process flaws that suggest benefits contradictory to experience for road construction also systematically underestimate the benefits of rail and other public transport network expansion. We submit that remedying these flaws would demonstrate that prematurely excluded rail initiatives, such as the proposed Doncaster and Rowville rail extensions, would better meet IV's defined needs than, for example, a North East Link tollway.

Our submission therefore recommends that:

- the 'Transport Modelling' initiative be greatly expanded in scope with a thorough review of methodology and surrounding process; and
- to guide the ongoing refinement of the Strategy, a more broad-ranging citizen jury process be implemented, with adequate time for deliberation, access to a broad range of expert opinion, and oversight by a stakeholder reference committee.

To read our full submission please visit our 'publications and submissions' page:

www.ptua.org.au/publications/papers-and-submissions/

We need real traffic priority for trams and buses.

Recent research by Monash Uni researchers Alexa Delbosc and Graham Currie has highlighted the problems besetting our tram network, in particular slow running and passenger safety issues due to the long-standing failure to adequately consider trams in Melbourne's traffic planning.

Prof Currie attributed much of the problem to Melbourne's unusually heavy reliance on 'mixed running', where trams and cars share road lanes. This factor dominates at some times and places, especially in the middle of the day in major shopping streets where road and footpath space is highly contested.

But this is only one part of the story: the problems on 'dedicated' sections of the network are even more serious in some ways than in mixed traffic.

PTUA research shows that during the morning and evening peak, the slowest tram (and bus) speeds are in the inner suburbs with dedicated lanes, almost solely due to our simple failure to follow European

practice in giving public transport speedy passage through traffic lights. This can be done without significant penalty to cross traffic.

From a safety perspective, the most serious incidents occur when cars suddenly veer on to dedicated tram lanes where their presence is unexpected, and often unlawful.

The solution here is physical barriers, with Flemington Road and St Kilda Road providing the most time-honoured and best examples.

It's encouraging to see attention being given by Vicroads, PTV and Yarra Trams to these major questions of efficient and safe transport, after many years of relative inaction.



Cars blocking a tram in Bourke Street (photo from Tony Morton)

Station skipping down, but Loop bypasses rife.

New government figures reported in PTV's "Track Record" show that station skipping has dropped, down about 90% - from 190 in the quarter to June 2015 down to 18 in the quarter to October 2016.

Loop bypasses remain a problem however. The October quarter saw almost a thousand City Loop bypasses. On top of this, there were 86 Westona/Altona Loop bypasses - more than one each

weekday affecting those three stations. These figures have not dropped significantly in the past year.

Alterations like this are excusable in some cases, especially where a small number of people are disadvantaged but it helps keep trains on time for the majority. The City Loop with just four tunnels represents a clear bottleneck on a network with fifteen lines.

But it is disruptive to passengers, and Metro must work harder to avoid sudden unplanned changes, particularly to crowded peak services, or where train frequencies are low.

And the state government must look at overcoming these types of snowballing delays by upgrading infrastructure, such as duplication of the Altona Loop, Cranbourne Line, and other single track bottlenecks.

Ballarat Branch update

The November meeting of the Ballarat Branch was quite well-attended, which was great to see. This time we had speakers from other groups come in to speak to the attendees about current issues in the region.

Firstly we had Noel Laidlaw from the Rail Revival Alliance, discussing their desire to see the return of passenger trains running

Secondly we had John Barnes, who is part of a small group who are concerned about the proposed redevelopment of Ballarat Station, the first phase of which involves selling off the bluestone goods shed and adjacent land, for the construction of a hotel and convention centre. The group's concerns centre around the lack of forward thinking in selling off

required. Shortly after the meeting, the Premier unveiled the plans for the site, and it became clear that the public transport improvements that appeared in the Ballarat Station Master Plan would not go ahead for the foreseeable future. The plans have proven very unpopular with locals, and it is likely this will become a sore point going forward.

Meetings of the Ballarat Branch have previously been quite *ad hoc*, but they will now become much more regular. The Ballarat Branch will meet on the second Thursday of each month (except January), at 7pm at Freight Bar on the corner of Mair and Peel Streets - we hope to see you there!



The bluestone good sheds at Ballarat station. Photo from Ben Lever

Geelong-Ballarat-Maryborough-Castlemaine. Noel particularly focused on the Geelong-Ballarat leg of this, which is perhaps the most viable and the most likely to go ahead in the near future, and the successes they've already had on the Ballarat-Maryborough leg, including the announcement in the 2016 budget of another return journey each weekday. A lot of good discussion was had about the Murray Basin Rail Project and the Ballarat Line Upgrade, and how these will affect current and future services.

strategically important land in the railway precinct, without necessarily providing any benefit for passengers. As he rightly pointed out, the railway precinct has served Ballarat for about 150 years, and when planning for the site we need to be thinking similarly long-term.

Another key concern was that the Planning Minister appears to have given himself (and any future Planning Ministers) much more power to determine what happens on the site, removing a lot of the checks and balances previously

Frankston Station Precinct - Update

Following the publication of the last PTUA Newsletter, a competition was held, seeking designs for a new Frankston Station from Australian Registered Architects. The competition attracted 39 entries. A jury chaired by the Victorian Government Architect will initially select 5 finalists, then narrow the field down to a winner by the the end of March 2017. All entries can be viewed online:

<https://goo.gl/RXypW9>

Geelong branch report

While the need to sack the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) council was arguable, having no individual councillors to liaise with is a problem for us. There was a core of councillors who were helpful to the cause of public transport, to a greater or lesser extent, but now we have no contacts at that level.

However, the bureaucrats behind the never-ending effort to hinder efficient and effective bus movement through the central city remain in place. The chief agency of that effort, the City's Central Geelong Taskforce, has been subsumed into the state government's Geelong Authority, and its staff continue to misinform the temporary administration.

Our branch convenor recently met the chair of the Geelong Authority Professor Roz Hansen, having tried to arrange a meeting with the chief administrator, Dr Kathy Alexander. There is no doubt that Professor Hansen is generally aware of what good public transport requires. However the senior CoGG bureaucrat accompanying her, despite asserting that we were all on the same page when it comes to the importance of public transport, contradicted that by raising the absurd city circle bus notion, and the idea of moving the central bus stops to a less workable and convenient location.

A couple of local state Labor politicians assure us that they won't agree to bus routes being moved out of the central city, but

making them more convoluted is still very much on the cards. This week the proposal to extend Johnston Park to the north was re-released for comment. It would cut the direct road link, used by all but one Geelong bus route, between Malop Street and Geelong station.

We keep getting told that nothing will be done to change central city bus routes until the long-mooted Transport Network Operating Plan has been developed. A steering committee of local and state bureaucrats is supposedly working on it but the Branch is being kept in the dark about what is going on. One of the members of the committee admitted he hadn't used local public transport in Geelong since he got his driver's licence when he turned 18.

2017 fare changes - good and bad news

PTV has announced that concession fares will be automatically granted to 17 and 18 year olds from next year, including those who are not in school.

In addition to this, 4 year olds will no longer be required to pay a fare, which will bring Victoria into line with other states around Australia. This was the subject of a PTUA campaign earlier this year, when it was noted that some parents were paying more for their kindergarten kids (regular concession fare) than for primary and high school students (who can get a Student Pass).



But the bad news is the state government is pushing ahead with a CPI plus 2.5% fare increase, meaning most fares will rise by about 4%. Of the most popular fares, the zone 1 two hour fare will go up from \$3.90 to \$4.10, with the daily up from \$7.80 to \$8.20.

The CPI plus 2.5% rises from 2015 to 2018 were originally announced in the December 2013 budget update by the then Coalition government, but have been delivered by Labor, meaning both major parties have contributed to these increases.

Photo from PTUA via Flickr

Level crossing removal progress

After some confusion over timing, both St Albans and Ginifer stations on the Sunbury line re-opened on Cup Day following grade separation major works

Under the Coalition's 2014 plan, St Albans (Main Road) was to have its level crossing removed, but Labor added Ginifer (Furlong Road) to the project in a package that includes crossings at Blackburn and Heatherdale, and

this appears to have brought the cost down.

St Albans is a premium station, with fare gates, lifts, stairs and ramps down to the platforms, which are in a trench below street level. Ginifer is not staffed, but also has lifts, stairs and ramps down to the platform.

Cleverly, Ginifer has been moved a few hundred metres south, adjacent to Furlong Road, and also now within walking distance of

Sunshine Hospital. Ramps at the northern end of the platform will help those who preferred the station at its old location.

Importantly, these two crossings were high on the ALCAM safety list, with Main Road St Albans in particular said to be the site of 16 deaths. Crossing removal also helps passengers get in and out of stations without delays, and can help bus service punctuality, as well as improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.



The New St Albans Station - photo from Daniel Bowen

There are now no level crossings on the Sunbury line between the city and Sydenham (Watergardens), meaning train services can be increased on the busiest part of the line without affecting traffic and pedestrian flows around the rail line - a significant political barrier.

Melton Highway and Calder Park Drive are now the last level crossings on the line, on the outer section between Sydenham and

Sunbury. Melton Highway is due to be grade separated by 2018.

Across town, the project to remove the Bayswater (Mountain Highway) crossing and provide a new station is also nearing completion, with a major shutdown of the line for works having taken place in November/December.

Major works are about to hit at Blackburn and Heatherdale,

resulting in the line being shut between Box Hill and Ringwood for most of January.

While the entire level crossing program was to be 50 grade separations over 8 years, the government is reportedly considering extending the removals beyond that - this would be very welcome, given the initial 50 planned missed some very troublesome crossings on the network.

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