

Canberra breathes life into the East West Link zombie

It was probably unrealistic to expect the Andrews Government's cancellation of the destructive and dangerous East West Link to herald a new era of sustainable and evidence-based transport strategy, following the example of world cities from Vancouver to Paris.

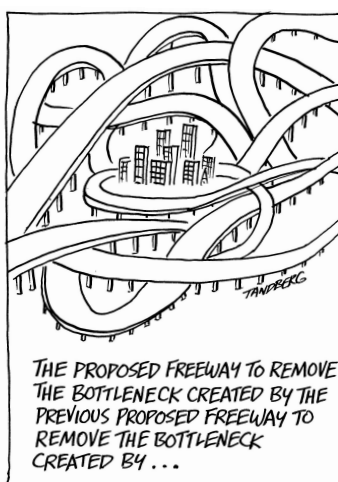
Instead, the government has sought to appease the still-powerful Melbourne road lobby with two road mega-projects of its own, the West Gate Tunnel and the North East Link. Given the massive overreach of the latter in particular - turning the Eastern Freeway into a US-style 20-lane superhighway - it's inevitable these would actually be seen as logical precursors to the East West Link. A series of media reports in September fulfilled our worst fears.

The re-elected Federal Coalition Government is reported to be seeking a new business case that provides the 'right' answer on the East West Link. The suggestion is that somehow, the projected increase in Melbourne's population will magically jack up the benefit-cost ratio from a mere 45 cents in the dollar to over \$1.

This bloody-minded persistence in pursuit of political objectives conjures the image of a rogue artificial intelligence in a dystopian sci-fi movie, dogmatically insisting "my logic is undeniable". The logic is of course fatally flawed. The biggest problem with trying to justify the East West Link rationally is that it's not actually a city access road. And given the Eastern Freeway is clogged with mainly city-bound traffic, one can't make it disappear just by building a road that sends it to Flemington instead.

Unfortunately this plain truth passes by many senior government figures, because for 30 years governments have advanced one sham 'bypass' road after

another, only for them to function - poorly - as radial commuter roads. CityLink is the most obvious, but even 'orbital' roads like the Western Ring Road and Eastlink function in large part to funnel more city-bound traffic onto the radial freeway network. Each one puts further stress on Melbourne's economic core, which can only absorb so many cars before succumbing to chronic congestion, a point passed years ago. And each new road undermines public transport's natural advantage in moving people in big-city numbers quickly, efficiently and safely.



But what should be made of the population growth argument? Simply this: if growth means Melbourne becomes more like London, Paris or Singapore in future, it's even more urgent we adopt those cities' strong public transport policies. London's own version of the East West Link - the Inner Ringway - never got built and likely never will be. Paris' version (along the Seine) was closed three years ago, and peak-hour traffic congestion actually fell by 11 per cent.

This revival of the East West Link zombie should also kill off once and for all the idea - enthusiastically embraced by the Premier - that big roads like the North East Link are 'alternatives' to other roads. Big roads anywhere just encourage more traffic, and create pressure for more big roads in the future. That's why governments have spent the last 50 years building bypasses of bypasses without making any progress on traffic congestion. It's time for a change of direction.

Enough is enough. New roads are strangling Melbourne, doing the exact opposite of what's claimed for them. Our would-be-great public transport system needs care and attention to fulfil its key role in a new century.

PTUA office

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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

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Stuart McKenzie
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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:
Meetings will be held regularly - watch the newsletter and website for details.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the PTUA will be held on Thursday 14th November at 6:30 pm. in the Hayden Raysmith Room, 4th floor, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

The guest speaker at the meeting will be James Pinder, CEO of V/Line.

Nominations for committee must be received in writing by the returning officer no later than 31st October. The nomination form is available on our website at www.ptua.org.au/members/meetings, or contact the office for a paper copy. Nominations will only be accepted from the floor at the meeting if insufficient nominations are received to fill required positions.

A reminder that you must be a current financial member to attend and vote at the AGM, or to be nominated, or nominate someone for, the committee. You may renew your membership at the meeting if it is still current or no more than four months lapsed.

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Edited by Anna Morton.

Newsletter contributors - Claudia Gallois, Ben Lever, Tony Morton, David Robertson and Paul Westcott.

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Ballarat and regions report

The Murray Basin Rail Project has come under fire from Pacific National recently, with claims that the network is now “incapable” of handling even a modest grain harvest. The project was designed to convert much of the state's north west to Standard Gauge, as well as improve the freight capacity of the network – but as it stands today, the result is quite the opposite. Low-quality rail, speed restrictions and the removal of crossing loops have effectively reduced the capacity of the line, leaving freight companies and farmers worse off than before it started.

The project has valuable aims, which is one reason it received both state and federal funding, and those aims are still achievable – but it's clear that there were problems from the beginning. The

state government did intervene to try to salvage the project when these problems became clear, but from the finished product it seems they may have been too late. The blame game has begun, and neither the state nor federal governments seem willing to contribute the extra funds needed to fix the problems and deliver the efficient rail freight network that western Victoria needs.

While it's understandable that people will want to point fingers and play politics, at the end of the day this is an absolutely crucial freight project, and it's unacceptable for it to remain half-baked. The additional funds must be provided as soon as possible, so farmers and freight operators aren't stuck in limbo any longer.

Since the last newsletter, the City of Ballarat has launched its second discussion paper for the Integrated

Transport Plan – the walking paper. Walkability forms a crucial part of the transport network – every public transport user is also a pedestrian at either end of their trip – and it's great to see that they have presented a strong vision for Ballarat's future walkability. Members can read the paper and provide feedback here: <https://mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au/itp-walking>

However, it seems that the ITP project has encountered some delays – the walking paper was launched in July, and the buses and trams paper was supposed to be launched in August. At the time of writing at the end of September, it has not yet been released – and it's not entirely clear why. We will be following this issue closely, but interested members can keep an eye on the MySay website for the most up-to-date information.

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 \$30.00 including postage.

Orders can be made sending your details to treasurer@ptua.org.au including:

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Please transfer \$30 by direct transfer to:

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BSB: 633-000

Account number: 111410973

Reference: Your Last name plus your first initial plus TS (eg – JONES J TS)

North East Link EES Inquiry

The State Government has recently concluded its public hearings on the Environment Effects Statement for the \$16 billion North East Link. These hearings were extended due to the very large number of submissions and requests to be heard - possibly a record for an EES process.

PTUA President Tony Morton addressed the Inquiry and Advisory Committee on behalf of the Association on 5 September. The following is a distillation of our submission.

The Victorian Government has a policy mandate, set in legislation, to pursue “forms of transport and the use of forms of energy and transport technologies which have the least impact on the natural environment and reduce the overall contribution of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions.” This must be carried out within a triple-bottom-line framework that emphasises user perspectives, community participation and transparency.

This mandate has been consistently ignored when assessing major transport projects in Victoria, the North East Link being the latest instance. Instead of being evaluated in a transparent framework weighing it up against alternatives with similar objectives, it has been framed as a predetermined outcome with only the most cursory comparisons. The habitual approach of modelling projected costs and benefits against a hypothetical ‘no build’ scenario is vulnerable to errors and deficiencies highlighted in our previous submissions, and by experts such as William

McDougall. The Victorian Auditor-General’s 2011 report on major road projects criticised the approach in similar terms.

The direct damage to the Yarra Valley, local businesses and residents is self-evident, and documented within the EES and other submissions. Further damage will result due to induced traffic amplifying noise, pollution, and transport-related greenhouse emissions. This damage would be absent either in a no-build scenario or in an alternative project scenario based on improvements to public and active transport. A decision to proceed regardless of this damage could only be justified through an illusory excess of benefits over total project costs.

Infrastructure Victoria in 2016 estimated total project costs of \$5-\$7 billion and benefits around \$8 billion after discounting. But according to the 2018 business case, the estimated (P90) project cost is \$15.8 billion in nominal terms and \$12.7 billion in real terms. Applying a 7% discount rate to future cash flows brings the cost to approximately \$8.5 billion (estimated, as the actual figure is not public)—while the discounted benefits are cited as \$10.9 billion. Both are substantially higher than Infrastructure Victoria’s upper estimates. The difference is not adequately explained given there is so little change between the 2016 and 2018 versions of the North East Link.

To our knowledge, the only formal consideration of a public transport alternative appeared in Chapter 4 of the 2018 business case. ‘Strategic Option 3’ comprised the following:

- Duplication of the Craigieburn and Pakenham rail corridors to accommodate freight via intermodal hubs at Donnybrook, Dandenong and Port Melbourne.
- A spur from the Hurstbridge train line to the La Trobe NEIC.
- Extension of tram route 86 to penetrate the La Trobe NEIC.
- Bus improvements in the North East region.
- Improvements to freight logistics including vehicle booking systems, hazardous goods handling and coordination between intermodal hubs.

These were estimated to have a capital cost of \$60-75 billion, yet no evidence of this was given, nor any substantive analysis to justify this particular list of initiatives (as distinct from, say, the abortive Port Rail Shuttle). A total of 16 pages of the business case report (325 pages plus appendices) was devoted to this and three road-based alternative options to the Project. This is not a reliable evidence base on which to approve a project with this level of damage.

The ability of the North East Link to meet an identified transport need depends on the assumption that the additional road capacity will alleviate congestion and reduce travel times. If the North East Link were merely to repeat the experience with other freeway and tollway projects around the world and reproduce the same congestion with higher traffic volumes, its benefits and justification would evaporate - the most likely outcome. Were the objective simply to increase the volume of

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North East Link EES Inquiry

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travel, with or without time savings, the least damaging way to do so would be with modes that use less space and energy and do not add to congestion: trains, trams, buses, bicycles and walking. All these are likely to suffer from the North East Link's induced traffic.

We particularly object to taking the Eastern Freeway median reserve to add road traffic lanes. For over four decades this has been reserved for railway purposes and engineered to simplify eventual provision of rail between Clifton Hill and Bulleen. The rail line could move upward of 30,000 people per direction per hour with current technology, compared with likely capacity less than 4,000 per hour on the equivalent road lanes. The Melbourne Metro 2 tunnel from Newport to Clifton Hill includes provision to extend to Doncaster via this median reserve and a tunnel under Lower Templestowe. Taking this median

for road lanes forecloses this option for the sake of infrastructure having less than one-fifth the capacity.

In place of a railway a 'busway' is proposed - actually a pair of segregated express bus lanes between Hoddle Street and the Doncaster Road Park-and-Ride facility. Yet no substantive action is proposed on improving bus travel times on the arterial road sections, particularly between Hoddle Street and the city, that now account for the most severe delays. In peak hour it is not uncommon for a bus to take a full hour to travel from the city to East Doncaster, with only 10 minutes of that time actually spent on the Eastern Freeway. The proposed 'busway' may save some three minutes off the fastest portion of the route, yet not address any of the major sources of delay to buses, let alone prepare the way for a rail solution that might bypass inner-city roads entirely.

We believe the benefits of the Doncaster busway are likely to be minor without substantial complementary measures outside the project area (which would also add significantly to project costs). Nor should any benefits of the busway be imputed to the North East Link itself to boost its benefit-cost ratio, given that segregated bus lanes on the Eastern Freeway can be provided independently of the North East Link.

In conclusion, we consider that the severe environmental damage from the North East Link, and the accompanying social and economic damage to businesses and residents throughout the project area, are not adequately justified by purported time savings or by economic benefits derived by these time savings. Nor has there been adequate consideration of public transport, active transport and freight alternatives capable of achieving the same objectives and meeting the same travel needs. The North East Link accordingly should not proceed.

Commuter Club news

Want to make sure you get your 2020 discounted 365 day yearly pass – a new Commuter Club card or renewal?

In December, PTV will announce new fares for 2020 and they also bring forward the application date for December Commuter Club passes – in previous years many of our CC patrons have missed out on

their December renewals before the price rise. Don't miss out – order yours **before 30 November** so you are guaranteed get your pass at the 2019 prices and beat the early December cut-off.

Order now at www.ptua.org.au/members/offers/

Note your new pass is not active

until first use.



Sustainable Cities

Sustainable Cities is a grassroots campaign that raises up the voices of locals who are pushing back against new major toll roads such as the North East Link. We're also campaigning for an integrated public transport plan to ensure that everyone has the ability to move around in a reliable, affordable and sustainable way. So we're aiming to get rail projects like Melbourne Metro 2, Doncaster Rail and the Suburban Rail loop built as soon as possible.

On 12th September, community members delivered a petition on behalf of 700 people calling for a stop to the \$16 billion North East Link toll road. Members of Parliament Sam Hibbins (Victorian Greens spokesperson for Transport) and Clifford Hayes (Sustainable Australia Party) accepted the petition and delivered it to decision makers. "[The North East Link is]

a lazy solution to frustrated residents in the North-East corridor that will only increase the city's dependence on cars," said community member Cynthia Pilli on the steps of Parliament. The event marked the end of the public hearings where concerned citizens had the opportunity to raise issues about the project before an independent panel.

The results from the public hearings are now being reviewed by Planning Minister Richard Wynne. We're calling on him to make the right choice and not lock us in to a future of toll roads. Send Minister Wynne an email today via www.melbournefoe.org.au/reject_north_east_link

Over the past month, Sustainable Cities has been ensuring the North East Link stays in the media with an article interviewing Coordinator Rachel Lynskey in the Herald Sun, our weekly banner drops over the

Eastern Freeway featuring in the Whitehorse Leader, as well as four of our collective members having letters to the editor published in the Age.

We're now ramping up to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan. We'll reflect on the historical and ongoing contribution that our first transport plan has made, as well as discussing what the vision for the future should be. In the 1969 Plan, 86% of the budget was for roads and only 14% was for public transport. The City Loop was constructed as a result of this plan, but the vast majority of other Public Transport options were never realised. We'll be marking this event with a panel discussion as well as a community demonstration.

To hear more about what we're up to, or to get involved, like www.facebook.com/WeSustainCities/ or visit www.getonboard.org.au.

Meet your editor - Anna Morton

I have been editor of PTUA News since mid 2013, taking over from the previous editors (and previous and current presidents) Daniel Bowen and Tony Morton.

I first joined the PTUA in the latter part of the 1990s, and soon found myself on the committee. Having grown up in a car dependent area, but by then living in the inner city, I could see the importance of providing good public transport and the freedom it gave people to move around the city. I remained on the committee (with a stint as Vice President and media spokesperson) until 2004, then

returned in 2015. I have been on the committee since then.



Before taking over as editor of the newsletter, I organised the mailouts - I have now handed this job to our current mailout organiser, Marg Pullar. I have also at times volunteered in our office, and once stood for state parliament under the Public Transport First banner.

Outside the PTUA, I teach English to adult migrants, and sing with the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir.

Sustainable Cities/PTUA new Community Organiser

Rachel Lynskey, who has served as our community organiser for the last two years, announced in September that she will be finishing up with us to take on a new role with Climate Works. Rachel has been an incredible worker and organiser and we wish her all the very best with her future.

We are very pleased to announce that Claudia Gallois will take on the role. Claudia has been volunteering at Friends of the Earth since 2017, is studying the Masters of Urban Planning and Environment at RMIT, and has experience in community organising with Fossil Free Melbourne University and the

Australian
Coalition.

Youth

Climate



Geelong branch report

At our October meeting, the Branch hosted the newly-elected Labor member for Corangamite, Libby Coker.

She "inherits" two promises made in March by the Morrison government to save her predecessor, Sarah Henderson: \$2 billion for Geelong "fast rail" and \$750m for duplicating the South Geelong-Waurn Ponds rail line.

She was interested in our views on those projects, and our other priorities for public transport in the Geelong area. Living at Airey's Inlet, and with two teenage daughters, she's aware of at least some of our current public transport deficits.

She said deputy PM Michael McCormack had already told her that the \$750 million would not be made available until 2024. With Sarah Henderson already back in parliament as a senator, the two of them need to work on getting the government to honour Morrison's March commitment a great deal sooner than Mr. McCormack's 2024 timeframe.

The Geelong Branch convener, also the PTUA regional spokesperson, recently met the head of the

team designing new long-distance VLocity trains for the Albury service, scheduled to come into service by 2022. No PTUA representative could get to a consultation session in Wangaratta, so the Melbourne meeting was a courtesy.

The new trains will only be used on the Albury line. Long-distance loco-hauled trains on broad gauge lines won't be replaced any time soon. In time, suitably-modified existing broad gauge VLocity sets are expected to replace them.

V/Line wants the new standard gauge VLocitys to be three-car sets; very convenient for the operator, but not for passengers.

The buffet in the new trains will be in the centre vehicle of each three-car set. With six-car trains being proposed for most services, how can all passengers get access to the buffet? On our four- or five-car loco-hauled sets, all passengers can walk through to the single buffet counter. Will staff be provided to operate both buffet modules? Will one buffet open for part of the journey and the other one for the rest? It's clearly not viable for passengers to alight at a station to get to the buffet, and then wait until

the next station to get back to their seats!

There will be one DDA-compliant toilet towards centre of each 3-car set, with about six spaces for disabled passengers on each side of it. There will be bike racks for a maximum of nine bikes, separate from the disabled spaces. Luggage space will be considerably increased over the present VLocity design.

There will be no first-class accommodation. Seating will be the same as now: 2x2, all with fixed backs, and a mixture of forward- and rear-facing seats, with some club seating. Fold-down trays will be provided for every seat, but there will be no fixed tables in the club-seating positions.

Despite the capacity of the electric generators under each car being increased, it will be impossible to provide a large number of individual 240V power and USB outlets. Wifi will be provided.

Our representative questioned a number of the decisions. Things are not set in stone but, ultimately, it comes down to the will of the government to accept and fund what passengers might want.

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