

Train changes will better use capacity

Timetable changes to fully utilise Melbourne's available rail capacity is a long-running saga, taking decades, but another step is expected to be taken in December.

The planned timetable shake-up will bring more consistency, as well as freeing up space in the City Loop to run more services.

The biggest change is that all Frankston, Sandringham and Werribee/Williamstown trains will run direct to and from Flinders Street, rather than the mix of Loop (mostly weekends) and direct (mostly weekdays) services that currently run.

December will also see Dandenong trains switch to running anti-clockwise via the Loop at all times, as part of changes to enable the introduction of the new High Capacity Metro Trains.

These changes mean some people will have slightly longer journeys, and some slightly shorter. They will make it easier for passengers to navigate the central core of the system, and indeed will help simplify the rail network map.

It will also, for the first time, be possible to catch a train from the underground stations to Southern Cross after 1pm on weekdays, providing a big benefit to passengers interchanging to V/Line.

These changes are just the latest in a long running series of steps to make more effective use of the available infrastructure and capacity by not trying to cram all fifteen Metro lines through the four track City Loop.

Weekday Sandringham trains were switched to run direct in 1996, followed by weekday Werribee trains in 2008, with Clifton Hill trains switched to run clockwise all day in the same year.

As previously, the payoff is that more peak services will be added on a number of lines.

Additionally, Williamstown trains will now run all the way into the City at most times on weekends, doubling capacity between Newport and Flinders Street, which will help with crowding and wait times.

As patronage recovers post-COVID, Metro and PTV will need to ensure the changes are communicated to returning passengers.

There may be crowding issues between Parliament and Richmond in PM peak due to the Dandenong line change. This is something authorities will need to watch carefully - along with ensuring that Dandenong line trains don't unexpectedly change destinations as they reach Flinders Street - a bugbear of passengers for many years.

But overall this is a positive step forward, making the rail network easier to understand, including for occasional users, and helping to maximise track capacity while we wait for the metro tunnel to be completed.

PTUA's guide to the City Loop on our website: ptua.org.au/tips/loop



Things will change in the City Loop in December.

PTUA office

Ross House,
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

(currently closed)

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
David Robertson – Secretary
Phil Bourke – Treasurer

Michael Bell
Daniel Bowen
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Stuart James
Tom Killip
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Anna Morton
Jennifer Williams

Geelong Branch:

Paul Westcott – Convenor

Ballarat Branch:

Ben Lever – Convenor

Member meetings

Note that all branch and in-person member meetings are temporarily suspended - watch this space and the website to find out when they resume.

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.

PTUA AGM with PT Minister Ben Carroll



The Annual General Meeting of the PTUA will be held online on Thursday 12th November at 6:00 pm.

For more details including a motion on notice to amend the PTUA Constitution please see p6.

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Edited by Anna Morton.

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Our thanks to Margaret Pullar and the dedicated mailout team.

COVID-safe public transport key to recovery

The global COVID-19 death toll has passed 1 million, and many survivors are experiencing lingering symptoms. Meanwhile uninfected people face disruption, restrictions and uncertainty. The death toll includes many public transport workers in cities like New York and London.

However other cities paint a very different picture. For instance Tokyo, Taipei and Hong Kong - densely populated urban centres with high rates of public transport use - have seen little, if any, transmission on public transport. How have they remained safe?

It's useful to go back a few years. In 2002-03 the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-1, or SARS for short),

is not airborne and mask wearing is discouraged. Over 1,000 people are dying each day in New York. In Taiwan however, facemasks are already required on public transport, and by May patronage is back to 90% of normal with negligible community transmission. In Japan the long-established practice of mask-wearing continues and no clusters are linked to public transport. Hong Kong successfully controls its outbreak as cleaning regimes and air filtration are ramped up on public transport and authorities rapidly respond with increased services to reduce crowding.

But there's also little evidence of significant COVID-19 transmission on public transport elsewhere

can be safe with the right precautions. The PTUA's recent submission to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into COVID-19 outlined steps to ensure safe travel as we move to COVID-normal. The key themes of COVID-safe public transport include fresh air, space for distancing, cleaning and minimising exposure times:

- * High efficiency filters or UV treatment in air conditioning systems combined with drawing in fresh air can remove airborne droplets from interior spaces to protect passengers.

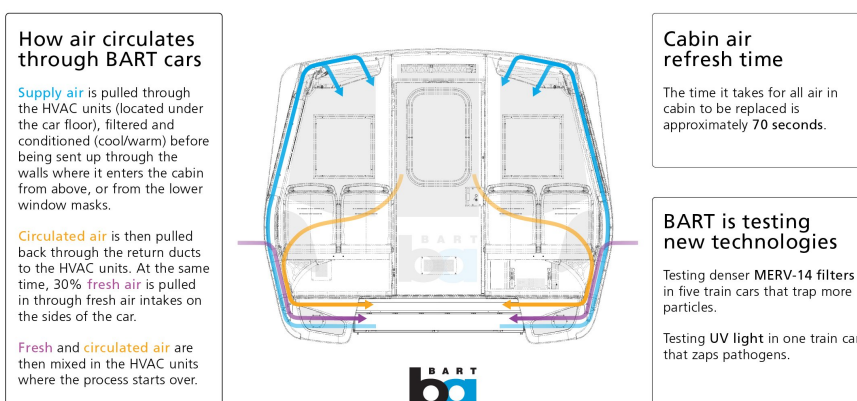
- * High frequencies across the whole day, every day, can allow passengers to spread out, both on a given service and to other times when patronage is lower.

- * Enhanced cleaning can eliminate the virus from surfaces.

- * Traffic priority for public transport (combined with timetable revisions) can speed up journeys, cutting exposure times, and enable vehicles and drivers to provide the higher frequencies that allow passengers to spread out.

The Victorian government's early response was encouraging with increased cleaning and more peak-shoulder services, however service cuts during Stage 4 restrictions made life difficult for essential workers. As we move towards loosening restrictions, we hope to see COVID-safe public transport assist the recovery and prevent the multitude of problems that would accompany increased car use.

The submission is on the PTUA website. <https://www.ptua.org.au/files/2020/PTUA-202010-PAEC-COVID-Inquiry-submission.pdf>



Airflow on BART trains - from San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit.

emerged in China and spread to neighbouring countries in east Asia. Already common in Japan, the wearing of facemasks quickly gained increased popularity in the region. Combined with a World Health Organisation-led response, SARS was contained before it established itself globally.

Fast-forward again to April 2020. COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in Europe and North America. Official guidance is that the new virus

in the world, at least since airborne spread was acknowledged. A recent study by the US Centers for Disease Control showed strong links between positive cases and bars and restaurants where facemasks were not worn, but lower public transport use among positive cases compared to uninfected people (albeit a statistically insignificant difference).

Nonetheless, the east Asian exemplars show how public transport

Infrastructure Victoria's Fair Move: Better service is still the main game

The recently released report “Fair Move: Better Public Transport Fares for Melbourne” from Infrastructure Victoria should spark a valuable conversation on public transport fare reform.

Many of the proposed measures however - most notably off-peak discounting - will only work properly with improved service frequency and span, particularly in the suburbs. Off-peak discount fares make a lot of sense in a ‘COVID normal’ world, so those able to are encouraged to avoid travelling at peak times to reduce crowding. It is a fair substitute for ad-hoc measures like the Free Tram Zone that advantage a lucky few without much of a clear policy rationale.

The obverse of this is that outside peak times, waiting times of 20 or 30 minutes for trains are common, and one can easily wait an hour or more for a bus. It’s the poor standard of service, not the lack of a price signal, that keeps people away from public transport at these times.

Multimodal is King

It is encouraging that IV has, in response to feedback from the PTUA and others on its earlier “Good Move” report, moved away from proposals that would have undermined the multimodal nature of the system. An important principle of our system (as with most of the world’s best) is that people aren’t charged extra simply because they need two different modes of public transport to complete their trip rather than one.

The Fair Move report accepts this and is improved as a result.

Despite this, Infrastructure Victoria continues to emphasise the idea of charging different fares for different modes of public transport, a notion that ultimately works against the objectives of the transport system.

Thanks to decades of hands-off planning, Melbourne has a train system (plus a few express buses that act like trains) heavily oriented toward central-city commuting in peak hour, a well-used but geographically limited tram system, and a residualised bus system that is used by small populations in the suburbs who don’t travel long distances and are prepared to work around infrequent services.

IV has looked at this largely-accidental outcome and formed the view that as the train users tend to have higher incomes and bus users lower incomes, charging more for a train and less for a bus is the best way to promote social equity.

The problem is that using this kind of statistical profiling as the basis for policy easily leads to unconscious discrimination. Train users have higher incomes on average, but this masks the fact a lot of lower-income people use

trains too, including in peak hour. And it’s those lower-income people who are less likely to be able to adjust their work hours and take advantage of discounted off-peak train fares.



What you pay when you touch on and off could become more complicated.

What the disparity between trains and buses actually reveals is the absence of high-income people from buses, rather than an absence of low-income people from trains. This isn’t seen nearly as much in cities like Vienna or Toronto, where public transport caters to a higher proportion of the population.

Likewise, IV’s modelling can’t be expected to pick this up, because the models are - out of necessity - based on where Melbourne has

Infrastructure Victoria's Fair Move: Better service is still the main game

been, not on where we ultimately want to be as a city.

The mode of transport for a given journey from A to B is ultimately determined by long-term network planning, and not within the control of individual travellers. If you're in Fawkner on the Upfield line and going south to access jobs and services closer to the city, then you're going to be on a train, even though it only runs every 20 minutes in peak hour and there's no plan on the horizon to improve that. Go further south and there's a parallel train and tram line for historical reasons, but they've evolved complementary roles: the tram is used for local shopping and the train to go to the city. Differential fares might see a lot more people crowd onto the Sydney Road tram, but it's difficult to see what social purpose that would fulfil.

Meanwhile, the one choice individual travellers can most easily control is whether to use public transport at all or to get in the car. That's a function of the quality of public transport service available, much more than finer details of fare calculations.

Seamless networks with multimodal fares - where what you pay depends on time and place, but not the technicalities of how the system gets you from origin to destination, because that's for the system and not its passengers to determine - have become established as world's best practice over decades. By and large, the cities charging different prices for different travel modes are those like Sydney still dealing with the

legacy of uncoordinated operators each with their own idiosyncratic fare system. The de facto global standard is the one regional transport authority - 'Verkehrsverbund' as the Germans call it - with a single fare scale.

Myki Pass Still Valuable

The PTUA agrees with IV that replacing the weekly Myki pass with a weekly fare cap, as originally proposed for Myki a decade ago, could make more sense in a post-COVID world where people might only travel any distance from home on 3 or 4 days each week.

But monthly and longer Myki passes should stay, as they play a valuable strategic role. Abolishing Myki Passes does nothing but alienate public transport's most loyal customers.

The Pass is also an important tool to encourage mode shift in a world where the average motorist spends as much on annual registration, insurance and servicing as on petrol or tolls. Accordingly they will be particularly sensitive to travel options that involve a substantial incremental cost per trip. A Pass is a convenient 'set and forget' option that also incentivises the use of public transport for non-work travel - all the more critical in a post-COVID world.

Independent Price Setting Requires Expertise

Ultimately, the design of a public transport fare system is a delicate balancing act involving diverse objectives. It needs to be simple for passengers to understand and

for authorities to enforce. It must be legible enough that passengers can readily anticipate the cost of their journey. It needs to provide a sustainable revenue source to maintain and expand services, while providing a competitive alternative to private car travel. It should be broadly reflective of the cost of providing the service, but must also be equitable - providing targeted concessions to those of limited means but otherwise charging similar amounts for recognisably similar journeys.

Designing a fare system and setting fares is thus a highly complex exercise, with no unique right answer. It is part of the strategic planning of the entire public transport system and needs to be undertaken by those with appropriate subject-matter expertise.

The IV report includes a recommendation for decisions on fares to be in the hands of an independent authority, modelled on IPART in New South Wales or the Essential Services Commission in Victoria. The idea may have some merit, but we also need to learn the lessons from NSW. In that state, the kind of multimodal approach to fares common in other parts of Australia and worldwide has been actively resisted by an 'independent' regulator with little relevant expertise in transport planning.

It would however be appropriate for these decisions to be given to an independent planning agency staffed by experts - such as PTV was intended to be a decade ago.

Annual General Meeting - with Minister for Public Transport the Hon Ben Carroll MP

The Annual General Meeting of the PTUA will be held online on Thursday 12th November at 6:00 pm.

Since the AGM will be conducted using a web forum, and we need to verify membership before providing a link to attend, we are asking members to register to attend the AGM.

Registration is open now - please visit the [PTUA Meetings](#) page to register.

The guest speaker at the meeting will be the Minister for Transport, The Hon. Ben Carroll MP.

Nominations for committee must be received by the returning officer no later than 31st October. The nomination form and details of the nomination process are available on our website. 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, to be nominated, or to nominate someone for, the committee.

Motion on notice

“Motion on notice: That the Rules and Statement of Purposes of the Association are amended according to the text agreed by the Committee of the Association on 8 October 2020 and subsequently notified to members with the notice of the Annual General Meeting.”

The PTUA Committee is proposing to bring our constitution up to date with current legislation and organisational practice. At present,

our constitution is silent on some legally required matters, where the legislated ‘Model Rules’ are deemed to apply. The proposed changes are intended to allow our constitution to function properly as a stand-alone document, without materially affecting the way the PTUA operates in practice. Some other ‘machinery’ changes are also proposed to clarify our operations, again without changing the way the PTUA operates day to day. Among these changes are clauses providing greater flexibility to allow members to attend meetings electronically (while maintaining our ban on proxy voting).

Links for AGM registration, nomination and the constitutional changes can be found via the [PTUA Meeting page](#). www.ptua.org.au/members/meetings.

Progress on Upfield line stations



A recent view of the new Moreland station taking shape on the Upfield line. The elevated rail has been in place for a while and now the new Moreland and Coburg stations are being constructed.

Geelong branch report

Despite regional COVID restrictions being less onerous than those behind the "Ring of Steel", it seems that Branch meetings are unlikely to be possible until next year. That remains very disappointing for our loyal attendees.

Local media interest in public transport has been minimal during the crisis, except for occasional queries about COVID safety on trains. Fortunately, that has rarely been a problem. On a few occasions, passengers have been expected to crowd on to inadequate rail replacement buses.

One member felt he should get off a bus to Torquay as it steadily filled with passengers on a recent warm day. Fortunately, an alternative, the V/Line bus to Lorne, was not far behind, although he had to pay another fare.

Although we don't have official figures, patronage on local buses, while much reduced, seems to have dropped less than on trains. That undoubtedly reflects the "social service" nature of our bus system,

being very much a take-it-or-leave-it service for those who can't drive.

Associated with that, those who use buses are much more likely to be in jobs that can't be done from home, as opposed to those who used to commute to Melbourne by train.

The federal budget writes another chapter in what is becoming a "Blue Hills" saga of the South Geelong-Waurn Ponds rail duplication. For perhaps the third time, federal funding has been "announced".

Prime Minister Morrison last announced it at Geelong station in March last year while supporting Sarah Henderson's unsuccessful campaign to retain Corangamite. When Henderson's successor asked about the promise a few months later, she was told the money wouldn't be forthcoming until 2022.

The budget undertaking was that the \$600 million will "brought forward", but as we've seen all too frequently, budgets can be a "smoke and mirrors" exercise. There is no guarantee that any

given funding allocation will be forthcoming, or when.

Similarly \$200 million was announced for a further upgrade to the Warrnambool line. Among other things, it will help provide a new crossing loop at Weerite. After almost a decade of indecision, Weerite has been chosen as the site of the loop to replace the one at Camperdown station, which requires one of the trains to reverse when passing another one there.

The trial cheap bus shelter, designed by the City of Geelong maintenance department, has been installed. It certainly looks cheap and certainly does nothing to enhance the streetscape. There may also be some doubt about its compliance with DDA requirements.

There are design guidelines for bus shelters, but when there was a query about previous shelter design which didn't appear to be covered by them, it seemed that the only way to have the issue determined was to get a ruling from the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Curfew cuts restored - eventually

As we noted in the August newsletter (page 1), the COVID-19 curfew brought sweeping cuts to evening public transport across Melbourne. This was at short notice, and communicated poorly, causing problems for essential workers needing to travel.

The restoration of the cuts has been equally poorly organised. When the curfew start time was pushed back from 8pm to 9pm on 14th September, it took two weeks for public transport services in that hour to be restored.

When the curfew was completely lifted on 28th September, it again

took two weeks to undo the remaining service cuts.

What does it say about our public transport authorities that they can slash services with just hours' notice, but it takes a full two weeks to restore them?

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Train service changes to better use capacity Annual General Meeting 12th November, with guest speaker Ben Carroll, Minister for Public Transport Fare reform

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If you are reading a friend's newsletter and would like to join and help the fight for better public transport, it's \$45 per year (\$25 concession). Contact the office, or see www.ptua.org.au/join

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