

**UPPER HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
INQUIRY INTO INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

Comments from the Public Transport Users Association

Org. No. A-6256L

13 April 2016

About the PTUA

- The PTUA is the recognised consumer organisation representing passengers on all public transport in Victoria. It was established in 1976, initially as the Train Travellers Association.
- The objective of the PTUA is an environmentally sustainable transport system which incorporates provision of high quality public and active transport, and the increased use of rail for freight transport.
- The PTUA is a member funded, non profit organisation with no party political affiliations.

Infrastructure—General

- Infrastructure + Service provision = Successful outcomes for passengers and Victorian economy
- Service plans have a tendency to be ignored in the push for major infrastructure: Regional Rail Link a prime example. Explicit service plans must be developed and published at the early planning stage.
- Push for new infrastructure must not come at expense of better plans for utilisation of existing infrastructure. Much scope to make better use of existing rail and bus assets to grow patronage (high capacity signalling, improved bus frequencies off peak).
- Traffic congestion cannot be addressed effectively with new road capacity. Induced traffic effect or 'law of congestion', documented by transport experts worldwide, means that new road lanes quickly fill with traffic and reproduce the same congested conditions. 'Congestion buster' solutions must focus on alternatives to private car use so people can choose to avoid congestion.
- Greater need for more public engagement and public control over major infrastructure decisions. Public feel frozen out of processes. Citizen stakeholders must be able to engage directly with subject matter experts particularly where they are personally affected by works.
- Likewise there is a need for transparency and evidence base in project selection and decision to proceed. Infrastructure Victoria has potential to lead a better process involving experts and public in development/scrutiny of business cases and triple bottom line assessment.

Melbourne Metro Rail Tunnel

- Important project to boost urban rail backbone in Melbourne's west. Equivalent in passenger capacity to about 3 West Gate Bridges.
- Unlike road expansion, new suburban train lines provide mobility in key corridors without adding to traffic congestion.
- Complementary projects in rail and bus network vital to unlock full capacity benefit. (Cranbourne / Pakenham corridor, Melton electrification, Clyde extension, future Rowville / Airport opportunities.)

Western Distributor

- Primary objective in community's eyes is getting trucks off residential streets in the west.
- WD design appears to be focussing on radial commuter travel to CBD, not on alternative to Francis Street for port access from Laverton North area. Threatens to undermine freight objective.
- Dudley Street off-ramps threaten to compromise E-Gate development, inner city traffic management.
- Substantial redesign called for, focussing clearly on primary objective and involving local community.

Port of Melbourne Privatisation

- Most ports worldwide competitive with Melbourne are developing substantial rail freight capacity (e.g. Sydney intermodal terminal, Port of Los Angeles).
- Port Rail Shuttle project fully funded and vital in short term to develop rail based freight handling capacity. At least 13 government reports have recommended that this proceed; however the Port sale legislation gives the operator an 8 year window for implementation. State should use leverage with private operator to progress this much faster, in the interests of the Victorian people and economy.
- In longer term, lack of rail access to Webb Dock is problematic. Plans/easements must be set in place to restore this.

Level Crossing Removal

- Grade separation of rail level crossings is vital to boost local activity centres, reduce transport delays, and enable rail network renewal (including high capacity signalling).
- Best method of grade separation is location dependent. Some concern that grade separation methods used in the past with community support would not comply with current standards.
- Any grade separation regardless of method will have both short-term impact on residents and traders, and long-term effect on local area (neighbourhood permeability, visual impact, etc).
- Vital opportunity to use grade separation / station rebuild to improve multimodal coordination. Boronia a good case study. Bus stops must be located close to station entrances and foot/cycle routes through new station precincts must be continuous and unbroken.

Airport Rail Link

- Melbourne Airport is largest single trip destination in metropolitan area outside CBD. This fact alone justifies inclusion in the backbone suburban rail network.
- Additional urgency for advance planning works due to airport passenger projections.
- Reserved corridor exists via Albion. This can be developed ahead of Metro tunnel utilising Southern Cross platform 8 for terminating airport services.
- In short term, 901/902 Smartbus interchange must be improved and 902 route extended due west, to provide improved access to northern/western suburbs including for 20,000-strong airport workforce. A high frequency shuttle to Broadmeadows could also supplement the 901/902 services to provide additional passenger capacity and travel options.