

## **WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT INQUIRY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE HEARING**

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### **Introduction**

The City of Melbourne has been successful in recent decades in catering for increased visitor travel both within and to the municipality by sustainable means, including much greater employment related travel. It has kept downward pressure on the number of those trips made by private motor vehicle and increased the numbers of daily trips by public transport, walking and cycling. It has been assisted in this ambition by state government policies and program which, if they have not always been materially supportive, have not been so directly opposed to this ambition as is the proposed West Gate Tunnel project.

If implemented, this project would destroy the Council's vision of 90 per cent of all commuter trips to the Melbourne CBD being made by public transport, walking or cycling by the year 2020 (compared with 72% in 2006) and 80 per cent of all trips to the City being made by public transport, cycling or walking by 2030 (compared with 51% in 2009).

This has been central to city building capacity. It is space efficient, thus making the area much more productive for a modern services-based economy, and enhanced liveability for its resident population as well as minimising noise pollution and motor vehicle produced air pollution.

### **ROUTE BUSES**

Other submissions drew attention to the need to bring road congestion under control in order to maintain quality route bus services in inner Melbourne and elsewhere (See City of Melbourne submission 184, Victorian Transport Action Group submission 364 and Transport for Melbourne submission 232).

It is important to recognise the importance of high quality route bus services for inner Melbourne. Basic data on these services are listed in Attachment A. These encompass all the eastern and north-east suburban services, including the Doncaster Rapid Transit (DART) services, which, with a small number of other services, provides for the whole of the City of Manningham, in the absence of rail or tram services in that municipality. We also have route buses that service south eastern suburbs as well as the western suburbs which also provide services in inner Melbourne.

We are faced with the prospect that the provision of greater roads capacity to the Melbourne CBD from the outer western suburbs, as promised by this project, will durably compromise route bus services to the City of Melbourne from many suburbs, including outer eastern suburbs

## **The importance of route bus services**

According to my calculations of the services shown in Attachment A about 2611 buses provide services each weekday to the Melbourne CBD and inner northern suburbs of the municipality. According to the most recent available data they carry an estimated 55,944 passengers each weekday. There is no publicly available data to show how many of these trips originate or terminate in inner Melbourne, but I surmise that a substantial proportion do. A large proportion of the 10,000 daily trips on the four DART services would, some others less so.

## **Lonsdale Street corridor**

Fifteen route bus services (See Attachment A) use the Lonsdale Street corridor, which is of fundamental importance to the people of the City of Manningham who rely entirely on route bus services (principally the Doncaster Area Rapid Transit Area buses) for public transport access to central Melbourne. There are no heavy or light rail services in these areas of middle and outer Melbourne. It is also important for direct travel to central Melbourne by residents of parts of Whitehorse, Boroondara, and Nillumbik for whom rail services remain similarly inaccessible.

Average weekday patronage (2014/2015) on the Lonsdale Street services is about 34,175 of which a large proportion would be destined for inner Melbourne suburbs and the Melbourne CBD.

Inward bound each weekday, 579 buses use the corridor. One hundred and three of them are morning peak hour services (7.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.). These numbers can be approximately doubled to include outward-bound services. So we have about 1200 bus movements on the corridor each weekday, which comprises about 4% of all vehicle movements on the corridor. Publicly available VicRoads traffic counts on Lonsdale Street shows that the figure has been relatively static for the last decade, the period 2006 to 2015. This appears generally true of other major roads in inner Melbourne which accommodate bus routes. It is important that these traffic counts not increase, and if possible be further reduced, to maintain the viability of these route bus services.

Running time is crucial for the maintenance of service standards. Timetabled running time is sensitive to average traffic conditions and currently varies between 9 minutes and 12 minutes on the corridor, depending on the time of day. These services traverse eight signalised city intersections and service up to seven bus stops to clear the CBD.

In my experience, actual running time can be much more variable than that depending upon experienced congestion. Any permanent increase in general traffic such as may flow from this project, would increase running times still further.

It is surprising to me that Bus Association Victoria (Submission 176) has such a relaxed view of this project for route bus operations. I do not know whether the Committee has heard from Transdev, which I understand is not a member of the Bus Association. Most if not all of the route bus services on the Lonsdale Street corridor are operated by Transdev.

### **Future use of Lonsdale Street for route bus services**

The numbers of bus services on Lonsdale Street has increased over the years, and can be expected to increase further. The most recent increases which are of significance occurred in July 2014, and I expect would have led to an uptick in patronage on several of these routes.

One possible innovation may be the introduction rapid transit buses on the corridor, with individual vehicles with a capacity of about 150 passengers. In June, Transdev and the investor, John Laing, lodged such a proposal with the Victorian Government under the market-led proposal process.

### **Victoria Market terminus**

Currently seven route buses service the Queen Victoria Market from a terminus in Franklin Street. The full list of services are shown at Attachment A. It can be readily observed that the usage of these stops is significant - 639 services use them on weekdays, 359 on Saturdays and 188 on Sundays. Many of these services require turning access which principally include Queen Street, Franklin Street, Peel Street and A'Beckett Street. The continuance of this terminus capacity may be in question, however, with the prospective closure of part of Franklin Street and the redevelopment of the Queen Victoria Market.

It should also be noted that in future greater consideration may be given to terminating route bus services in the Melbourne CBD which had hitherto been "through" services which serve suburban destinations on opposite sides of the Melbourne Central Business District. The primary motivation for this route redesign is to improve on-time running for these bus services. Any additional congestion of city streets would make it more difficult to turn around buses within the CBD.

### **Other route bus services**

In the immediate north of the CBD we have a number of services which are threatened by increased traffic in the area

Route 401 which provides a semi- express service weekday between North Melbourne railway station and Melbourne University via Dryburgh Street and Arden Street has been a major success story with a daily patronage of 3,925 in 2014-15.

Route 402, between Footscray and East Melbourne via North Melbourne had weekday patronage of 2828 in 2014-15. Route 403, between Footscray Road and Melbourne University via Dynon Road and Arden Street will also be affected by additional traffic in the inner northern suburbs.

### **Future Inner Melbourne Bus services**

There is a need to provide additional route bus services in inner Melbourne. This would include higher frequencies on many existing services. Additional services are also required in inner suburbs to interlink with heavy rail services, in particular, and to fill gaps not served by tram services. These gaps are quite significant in number, and general traffic volumes would need to be kept down to make these services viable.

### **Vehicle emissions and public health**

Emissions from vehicles include gas and particle emissions from engine combustion. Brake and tyre wear also emit pollution potentially harmful to human health. Human exposure to these pollutants is increasing quite quickly as inner Melbourne continues to experience rapid growth in its resident population (in the period 2016 to 2036 projected to grow by 83%, from 36,959 to 67,469 in the CBD, for example, and from 11,324 to 24,801 in Docklands, an increase of 119%). The workforce is also increasing substantially in inner Melbourne. Increased foot traffic and cycling exposes more people to air borne pollutants from road traffic, a major impediment to active transport.

There is no doubt that increasing private motor vehicle traffic, as this project contemplates, will contribute significantly to air pollution in the City of Melbourne Unfortunately, the bus fleet in Melbourne is diesel powered. Some of it is pretty elderly, although possibly not as elderly as the trucks driving in and out of the Port of Melbourne each day. Diesel buses, I understand, are roughly equivalent to heavy trucks for airborne emissions dangerous to human health. Other cities have converted to low emission/ no emission buses and we should do the same.

## ATTACHMENT A

Route	Mon-Fri	Sat	Sun	Weekday morning peak inbound 7.30 a.m to 9.00 a.m.*	Average weekday patronage
200 (Bulleen to City)	52	35	32	7	2877
207 (Doncaster SC to City)	52	34	32	5	3336
250 (La Trobe Uni to City)	53	35	27	4	2668
251 (Northland SC to City)	42	24	15	5	1645
302 (Box Hill to City)	40	30	14	6	2405
303(Ringwood North to City)	4	Nil	Nil	4	N/A
304 Doncaster SC to City)	32	23	11	6	1303
305 (Doncaster East to the City)	15	Nil	Nil	8	1848
309 (Donvale to City)	13	Nil	Nil	7	739
318 (Deep Creek to the City)	4	Nil	Nil	3	330
350 (La Trobe Uni to City)	25	Nil	Nil	5	935

905 (East Doncaster via Templestowe to City)	74	36	29	10	3497
906 (Warrandyte to City)	77	36	28	14	4386
907 (Mitcham to City)	74	44	36	11	5807
908 (East Doncaster to City)	22	Nil	Nil	8	2399
Total	579	297	224	103	34175

Source: Public Transport Victoria metro bus patronage for the year 2014/15

\* At the intersection of Lonsdale Street and Swanson Street, Melbourne CBD

## ROUTE BUS SERVICES WHICH USE THE QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET TERMINAL

Route	Mon - Fri*	Sat*	Sun*	Average weekday patronage
220 (Sunshine to Gardenvale)	157	141	60	5142
232 (Altona North to Queen Victoria Market)	93	46	22	765
234 (Garden City to Queen Victoria Market)	147	112	84	N/A
235 (Fisherman's Bend to Queen Victoria Market via Williamstown Road)	90	38	22	1322
236 (Garden City to Victoria Market via South Melbourne)	37	22	-	N/A
237 (Fisherman's Bend to Queen Victoria Market via Lorimer Street)	67	-	-	908
546 (Heidelberg to Queen Victoria Market)	48 (5)**	-	-	528
<b>Totals</b>	639	359	188	8665

\* All services, \*\* ( ) Terminates at Melbourne University

Source: Public Transport Victoria metro bus patronage for the year 2014/15

## INNER NORTHERN ROUTE BUS SERVICES

Route	Mon-Fri	Sat	Sun	Weekday morning peak inbound 7.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.	Average weekday patronage
401 (North Melbourne to Melbourne Uni)	218	Nil	Nil	23*	3925
402 (Footscray to East Melbourne)	87	41	22	9**	2828
403 (Footscray to Melbourne Uni)	16	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total	283	41	22	32	6753

\* From North Melbourne railway station

\*\*From Footscray railway station

Source: Public Transport Victoria for the year 2014/15

## OTHER CBD ROUTE BUS SERVICES

Route	Mon - Fri*	Sat*	Sun*	Average weekday patronage
216 (Caroline Springs to Brighton Beach)	43	30	12	3027
219 (Sunshine South to Gardenvale)	37	29	15	2318
605 (Gardenvale to City)	44	13	5	1006
Total	124			6351

\* City-bound services only.

Source: Public Transport Victoria Metro bus patronage for the year 2014/15