



TABLE TALK

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Map from the Age, 7 May

Victoria's Railway Budget: page 2



Map from Newcastle Herald 22 May

Newcastle's new tramway: page 5

TOP TABLE TALK – VICTORIA'S RAILWAY BUDGET

The Victorian Budget presented on 6 May had a heavy emphasis on railway projects. Expenditure of \$15 billion on public transport projects is envisaged over the next few years. The main features are planning for the Melbourne Rail Link cross-city tunnel, and provision for a railway to Melbourne Airport:

- Planning of the major **Melbourne Rail Link** cross-city railway tunnel (see next item).
- \$76.4 million this year (\$685.3 million in total over future years) for removal of four very busy **level crossings** see item below).
- \$2.5 billion over a number of years for the **Cranbourne-Pakenham Rail** Corridor Project (already announced – see April *Table Talk*, page 4).
- \$209.5 million to operate and maintain the **Regional Rail Link**, including new bus routes.
- \$43.8m to address safety issues in the Melbourne underground **City Loop**. Remediation work will be carried out especially on fire and sprinkler systems and overhead power systems.
- \$55 million for construction of a **new station at Caroline Springs** approximately 19.6 km from Melbourne between the existing Deer Park and Rockbank stations on the Ballarat line.
- \$21 million for a new (and long promised) **station at Southlands** adjacent to the Southland shopping centre on the Frankston line between Highett and Cheltenham stations. 4,400 passengers are expected to use this station each day, which would make it the fourth busiest on the Frankston line.
- \$14.3 million for a one km **passing loop at Rowsley** between Bacchus Marsh and Bank Box Loop on the Ballarat line. At present trains cannot cross between Parwan Loop (45.7 km) and Bank Box Loop (65.9 km). Ballan station (79.7 km) will also be upgraded. Construction is expected to begin late this year, with completion in 2015.
- \$5.4 million for improved disability access at **Geelong** station.
- \$1.3 million to protect the corridor for a future **rail link to Avalon Airport**.
- \$390.4 million for free **tram travel** in Melbourne's CBD/Docklands and travel in zones 1 and 2 at a zone 1 fare.
- \$7.7 million for more **ticket inspectors** on trains, trams and buses.
- \$180-220 million for **Mildura line standardisation** (see later article).
- \$56.2 million for the **Transport Solutions** initiative which delivers targeted projects that reduce bottlenecks on key freight routes in regional Victoria.
- \$58 million, including a Commonwealth co-contribution of \$38 million, for the establishment of **Port Rail Shuttle** services to improve the efficiency of containerised freight transport throughout Melbourne by connecting the Port of Melbourne to major outer suburban freight hubs by rail.
- \$20m to continue the Mode Shift Incentive Scheme (MSIS) which promotes the movement of **containers from regional Victoria** by rail to the Port of Melbourne.

Melbourne Rail Link

The Melbourne cross-city suburban railway tunnel is now christened as Melbourne Rail Link. \$80 million has been committed in expenditure over the next year and \$830 million over the next four years. Total expenditure on this

project over many years will be \$8.5 to \$11 billion. Projections are that the project will increase the capacity of the Melbourne suburban network by 30% and carry 35,000 passengers an hour on 30 extra peak services.

The tunnel is now envisaged to connect with the Frankston line via new underground platforms at South Yarra station. It will be in tunnel via a station at Domain (with a tram interchange), then via a new station at Fishermans Bend, Melbourne's next major urban development suburb. The tunnel continues with a route through the City radically different from that originally envisaged under Swanston St. Now the tunnel will continue to new underground platforms at Southern Cross station where the new line will connect to the existing network. This will avoid problems which had been anticipated when the plans were for it go under Swanston St. Construction there would have been highly disruptive. On the other hand, the new route does not provide the convenient interchanges at Flinders St and Melbourne Central stations formerly envisaged. An effect of this will be that Southern Cross will become a more important station than Flinders St. This also reflects the increasing importance of Southern Cross with the development of the Docklands area. Under current plans there will be:

- Twin 7.5 km tunnels from Southern Cross to South Yarra;
- New underground stations at Fishermans Bend (Montague) and Domain;
- New underground platforms at Southern Cross and South Yarra;
- Train-tram interchanges at Southern Cross, Montague, Domain and South Yarra; and
- A rail link to Melbourne Airport.

The anticipated operating pattern when Melbourne Rail Link opens is:

- Frankston line to South Yarra then via Melbourne Rail Link, then via City Loop and out to Belgrave, Lilydale and Alamein lines,
- Sunbury and Melbourne Airport to Southern Cross then direct to Pakenham and Cranbourne,
- Werribee and Williamstown to Southern Cross then direct to Sandringham,
- Craigieburn and Upfield around the City Loop,
- South Morang and Hurstbridge around the City Loop, and
- Glen Waverley to Flinders St.

In other words, many commuters will have to change to access some parts of the City.

Melbourne: Level crossing removal

Level crossings in Melbourne (aka as Level Crossing City) will be removed at:

Main Road, Saint Albans: The cost will be \$200 million of which \$151 million will be provided by the Federal government, and the rest from the state with savings from the Regional Rail Link project. The Premier, Denis Napthine, said the St Albans level crossing was "undoubtedly the most dangerous level crossing in Melbourne" and had to be abolished. The project, which will commence later this year and end in 2017, will include lowering the rail line and building a new, "premium" train station under Main Road. The train station car park will also be moved, and a new bus interchange and pedestrian overpass will be built to replace the existing crossing at Ruth St. No doubt, construction of this project will require significant replacement of train services by buses.

Burke Road, Glen Iris: This location currently includes a tramway level crossing. There will be a rail under road

solution. Approximately 26,500 road vehicles, 158 trains and 186 trams use this section of Burke Road every weekday. During peak times, boom gates can be down for up to 47 minutes during the two hour peak, affecting traffic flow and queuing onto the Monash Freeway. A new station will be built as part of the project with nearby tram stops consolidated and upgraded.

North Road, Ormond: More than 41,200 vehicles travel along North Road each day, including 180 bus services. The current boom gates are down for approximately 39% of the peak period with traffic queues of up to 800 metres. The busy Frankston rail line has more than 223 passenger trains passing through Ormond each day. Ormond station will also be redeveloped with the road going beneath the railway and a new station entry on North Road and a new pedestrian crossing.

Blackburn Road, Blackburn: The Blackburn Road project will be a rail under road solution, and include improvements to the existing station. Approximately 15,000 vehicles travel through this part of Blackburn Road every day. During peak times, the boom gates can be down for up to 45 minutes during the two hour peak period.

Procurement will commence in 2014-15 and construction for the removal of the three level crossings will be complete by mid-2017.

V/Line: Mildura line standardisation

On 3 May, Victorian Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Peter Ryan, announced that the Geelong to Mildura freight line would be converted to standard gauge and a link built from the Mildura line to the Hopetoun line, at a cost of \$220 million. The first stage, costing \$41 million, would involve upgrading the Mildura and Hopetoun lines. This will provide for 21 tonne axle loading that will increase train loads by 300 to 400 tonnes, a 15% improvement. The final cost and alignment of the full Mildura to Geelong rail standardisation will be dependent on the outcome of the final business case to be delivered by the end of 2014. This project is also envisaged as paving the way for the potential future creation of a link between Mildura and Menindee, near Broken Hill, connecting to the Perth interstate rail line.

Victorian Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews is noncommittal on the plan to standardise the line. The *Weekly Times* weekly rural paper understands Labor is unlikely to implement the plan in what is mostly safe Coalition territory if it wins the 29 November state election.

NEW WORKING TIMETABLES

Australian Rail Track Corporation 22 June 2014

A new nation-wide ARTC Working Timetable commences on 22 June. It can be found on their website at <http://www.artc.com.au/Content.aspx?p=161>

Geoff Lambert comments: I expected to see changes associated with the new Tullamarine Passing Lane. They are not there. I also hang out for the long-awaited (three years now) new V/Line timings. Not there. However, on the Victorian NE line in the down direction there seems to be eight fewer trains per week. On the NSW North Coast, there is jiggling of the Stratford coal trains.

Sydney area Passenger 7 June 2014

A new Transport for NSW / Sydney Trains Working Timetable for Passenger trains in the Sydney area has been issued. It is valid from 7 June for Weekends (Book 2) and from 9 June for Weekdays (Book 1). The following changes are incorporated;

- Commissioning of Glenfield – Leppington Rail Link interface with altered train working.
- Altered run numbering.
- Changes to stabling arrangements and maintenance cycles.
- Increased deployment of Waratah trains (A sets).

- Replacement of many S Sets with K Sets on Sector Two.
- Build-up of certain Central Coast Intercity services, revised train rosters and altered empty running.
- Altered pathing for Mechanised Track Patrol.
- Altered Working, especially at Sydney, Eveleigh, Penrith, Blacktown, Mt. Victoria and Hornsby Yards.
- Revised Crew Training trains on Sector Three.
- Extension of weekend Run 160S from Hornsby to Berowra.

Sydney area Freight 7 June 2014

A new Transport for NSW / Sydney Trains Working Timetable for Freight trains in the Sydney area was valid from 7 June for Weekends (Book 5) and from 9 June for Weekdays (Book 4).

Sydney area Freight 21 June 2014

The preceding WTT will be of very brief validity, because yet another Transport for NSW / Sydney Trains Working Timetable for Freight trains in the Sydney area will be introduced from 21 June for Weekends (Book 5) and from 23 June for Weekdays (Book 4).

Thanks to Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs and Geoff Lambert for Working Timetable news.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Federal Budget: Good for freight railway projects, but urban public transport? – apparently not needed

The Federal government's Budget was presented on 13 May. The present Federal government is only interested in freight railways. Indeed, the Prime Minister has explicitly stated on a number of occasions that the present Federal government will not fund urban public transport projects. This view was implemented in the Budget. All Railway projects to receive funding are (with one exception) freight railways. Tasmanian railways did unexpectedly well. Projects to receive funding were:

- \$691.6 million in ongoing funding for the **Northern Sydney Freight** corridor.
- \$300 million (already announced) for pre-construction works on the **Melbourne-Brisbane**

Inland Freight Railway. Particular attention is being given to those parts of this project that can be fast-tracked (pun intended). These are upgrades of the existing lines from Parkes to Narromine NSW and Narrabri-Moree-North Star NSW, and construction of a new dual (standard and narrow gauge) railway from Rosewood in the Brisbane Valley to Kagaru on the existing standard gauge line south of Brisbane. This will enable coal trains to bypass Ipswich and Brisbane suburbs, a subject of recent controversy. Planning for this section is well advanced and the Queensland government has acquired much of the land required. The Federal government is expected to consider further advice on the implementation of the Inland Railway towards the end of 2014. The Federal government has established an Implementation Group to

advance the project and the ARTC has established an Inland Rail project team. One of the first pieces of work for the Implementation Group and ARTC will be to update earlier cost estimates and look at the most suitable funding models.

- \$10.8 million for planning work for the **Maldon-Dombarton** railway (however see the item below that the NSW government is no longer interested in this project).
- \$75 million to upgrade tracks on the **Port Botany line** and investigate capacity enhancements to the Southern Sydney Freight line (already announced on 7 March, see *April Table Talk* page 2), and also \$67 million to increase capacity and improve efficiency of freight rail operations on the Port Botany line.
- \$232.1 million for separation of the interstate freight line from the metropolitan rail network at **Torrens Junction**, Adelaide, building on the already-completed separation at Goodwood.
- \$119.6 million to raise the quality of **Tasmanian mainlines**, plus \$20.1million to raise capacity on the Tasmanian main north-south line, plus \$13.3 million for improvements at Rhyndaston on the north-south mainline, plus \$4.9 million for an intermodal terminal at Bell Bay.
- \$13 million for a road over rail bridge 12 km south of Alice Springs.
- \$17.2 million for construction of the second stage of the North Quay Rail Terminal at Fremantle to increase capacity of the rail shuttle service between the port and the intermodal freight hub at Kewdale.
- \$2.9 million for a trial of low profile concrete sleeper between Avon and Goomalling WA as an alternative to jarrah sleepers.
- \$38 million to support the establishment of **Port Rail Shuttle** services to improve the efficiency of containerised freight transport in Melbourne by connecting the port to major outer suburban freight hubs by rail.
- \$151 million for elimination of the **Main Road level crossing, St Albans** (see the Victorian Budget item above),
- \$1 million for an “active” level crossing west of Ballarat.
- \$200,000 for an intermodal terminal at Warrnambool, Victoria.
- \$800,000 to archive the records of the former Australian National Railways (if this can be regarded as a railway project).

The only non-freight railway funding was \$518.4 million as Federal contribution towards construction of the **Petrie to Kippa-Ring railway** in northern Brisbane. Presumably this funding is because of a binding agreement made by the previous government.

The Budget papers indicate that from 2014-15 to 2017-18 spending on rail projects will decrease by 69%. In the current Budget, there was about \$37.4 billion in road funding - ie, more than 20 times the amount of railway funding.

The Federal government has abolished the High Speed Rail Advisory Group.

Queensland Rail Traveltrain: Farewell Sunlander

The final northbound Sunlander train will depart Brisbane for Cairns on Sunday 28 December and the final southbound Sunlander will depart Cairns on Wednesday 31 December. Prior to that from 1 December, in the tourist off-season, the Sunlander will operate only once weekly (Sundays from Brisbane, Tuesdays from Cairns), instead of the usual thrice weekly. The Sunlander was introduced in 1954. The two

Sunlander sets will be replaced by two additional Spirit of Queensland diesel tilt train sets, construction of which is now being completed.

Aurizon: Bauhinia electrification

The railway from Kinrola to Rolleston is currently being electrified by Aurizon as part of their extensive Central Queensland coal lines network. This line was opened in 1975 as an extension of the Kinrola branch.

Gold Coast Tramway: Possible extension

The Queensland government has engaged consultants to report on the costs and delivery for the second stage of the Gold Coast Tramway, involving a possible extension to connect with the SE Queensland rail network at Helensvale station.

ARTC: Uncertain future

The Federal government’s Commission of Audit report was released on 1 May. It contained 64 far-reaching recommendations to curtail government expenditure and improve finances. These included the privatisation of a number of organisations including either all of the Australian Rail Track Corporation or just the ARTC’s Hunter Valley coal network. The Commission said this should occur after the next election in 2016. The Commission commented that “The monopoly characteristics of ARTC’s network can be adequately managed and regulated in the public interest, much the same as airport and electricity distribution monopolies. A scoping study could examine an appropriate access regime, implications for ARTC’s leases and wider considerations stemming from the intergovernmental agreement that established the ARTC.”

The Commission also recommended the privatisation of the Moorebank Intermodal Company which is to build a common user freight terminal in south west Sydney. The Commission said, “The Commonwealth’s ongoing support of the Moorebank Intermodal Company supports the project to deliver upon its objectives of improving national productivity through an efficient supply chain, increased freight capacity and better rail utilisation. Then, subject to market conditions, the Commonwealth intends to privatise its interest in the project.”

Moorebank Intermodal terminal(s)

The Moorebank intermodal Company, the Federal government body developing a terminal in SW Sydney, and Aurizon and Qube who were developing a different intermodal terminal site in Moorebank on the other side of the tracks, are now discussing development of one site.

ARTC: NW NSW lines temporary closure

The ARTC lines Gulgong-Merrygoen and Troy Junction (near Dubbo)-Merrygoen-Binnaway-Werris Creek were temporarily closed from 28 to 31 March, because of the urgent need to undertake repairs on wooden bridges. During that period, Pacific National’s Newcastle-Cobar and Newcastle Broken Hill mineral trains were required to make a very lengthy detour via Sydney, Cootamundra and Parkes. They did not operate via the Blue Mountains line because of additional locomotive and fuel requirements for the steep gradients and crew unfamiliarity. However, this added 400 km extra to Cobar and 175 km extra for the Broken Hill trains. Qube container trains were able to access Fletcher Siding in the Troy Junction-Elong Elong section by special arrangement. The Troy Junction-Werris Creek line is one of the last lines in Australia to remain controlled by the Electric Staff system.

ARTC: North Coast derailment chaos

A freight train derailed near Nambucca Heads on the NSW North Coast line on the afternoon of Wednesday 14 May, causing significant damage. Trains did not resume operation past the site until Friday 16 May.

On the same day, another freight train derailment near Bonnie Vale (east of Kalgoorlie) disrupted traffic on the east-

Newcastle's new tramway

The Newcastle light rail line will run down the heavy rail corridor then shift to Hunter St and Scott St to the beach at Pacific Park, under a "hybrid" route the NSW government has selected. Minister for Transport and the Hunter Gladys Berejiklian said the route struck the "best balance" between "a quality transport outcome for Newcastle" and "allowing the city and its waterfront to be reconnected and revitalized. I am pleased for the Hunter community that this decision has now been made and we can get moving on the delivery of this important project," she said. Ms Berejiklian said he system provided rail services "at least every 10minutes", but the hours of operation for the service are yet to be determined.

A start date for work is yet to be given, but is expected to be by December. The system can be summarised as follows:

INTERCHANGE

Light rail will cross Stewart Avenue to coincide with road traffic movements along and across Hunter St. The new interchange – near the Store building on the western side of Stewart Avenue – will feature rail, light rail, buses and taxis in one location. Light rail does not need boom gates, making the Merewether St crossing less problematic, but industry sources say the Railway St level crossing will shut permanently once the light rail system is operational.

CONSTRUCTION

Trains will terminate at Broadmeadow and Hamilton during construction of the terminus, with buses to take rail passengers into the city, including express services at peak hours. Once the terminus is built, the light rail system will be started. The government will "work closely" with nearby businesses to minimise disruption once work starts on the Hunter St end of the tracks. The entire project could take three years to build.

TYPE OF TRAINS

Light rail comes in three broad types – high-floor, mid-floor and low-floor. The government says it has not decided on "a procurement policy" but Ms Berejiklian has previously recommended minimising the types of rolling stock in use and the inner west light rail in Sydney uses low-floor carriages.

DEVELOPMENT

Moving the eastern end of the route onto Hunter and Scott Streets has raised concerns the vacant section of rail corridor will be made available to developers. The government says it is investigating options to reuse Newcastle railway station, recognising its heritage status.

MONEY

The state's new "Opal" ticketing system – which operates across modes of transport – will be available on the light rail. Fares are yet to be announced. Ms Berejiklian would not be drawn on the future of Newcastle's free inner-city bus services, which supporters fear will be lost once construction of the terminus starts.

The government has committed \$460million to the project, including \$340million from the lease of the port. Critics say most of the money will be spent on terminating heavy rail, rather than building light rail. The government is being lobbied to spend more of the net \$1.5billion to be gained from the port lease.

EXPANSION

Ms Berejiklian says expansions of the light rail system could go to "the suburbs, beaches and the broader Hunter Region". The *Newcastle Herald* understands the western end of the light rail system will run on Beresfield St, next to Wickham station, to allow the existing station to be used as a

west transcontinental line.

light rail depot. This would also make an extension to the west easier with light rail south of the retained heavy rail tracks.

Rail to the second Sydney airport – eventually



Map from Sydney Morning Herald, 28 April

On 28 April NSW Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian released a consultation package for an extension of the south-west rail link from Leppington through the Badgerys Creek airport site, and also further south from Bringelly to Oran Park and Narellan and north to St Marys. The government is not proposing to build the new lines soon but says it wants to preserve the corridors so they can be more easily built in the future.

There will be no railway to the airport when it opens but Federal Transport Minister Warren Truss has said the airport should be designed to accommodate a train line in the future. The Federal government has said it will not fund train lines to a Badgerys Creek airport but will fund up to 80% of major road upgrades near the airport. New NSW Premier Mike Baird said: "It's roads first, the airport second and then rail."

Ms Berejiklian said buses would be able to satisfy the demand for public transport when the airport opens. The government's projections show the airport would initially carry about 3 million passengers a year, about the same as Canberra and Hobart. "Longer term, we are putting plans in place to make sure Sydney's rail network will connect Badgerys Creek airport with the rapidly growing communities that will rely on it," Ms Berejiklian said. She added the South West Rail Link was due to open in 2015 "one year ahead of schedule and \$100 million below the \$2.1 billion budget". Ms Berejiklian said reserving the corridors wasn't "just about servicing an airport, it's about servicing Western Sydney communities with appropriate transport links, now and into the future". By reserving the corridors, it would keep down the costs of building the rail line. Government sources said in present dollars, the links would cost between \$4 billion and \$5 billion to build. "We've seen previous growth centres of Sydney let down by insufficient transport planning by previous governments and we're not making that mistake," Ms Berejiklian said. "This corridor planning means when the time comes to extend the South West Rail Link, we will be ready and costs will be lower."

The south-west rail link, which runs from Glenfield to Leppington, is due to open in 2015. In the past five years, the suburb of Oran Park has developed faster than the area immediately adjacent to the new line, and Narellan is also set for a major expansion.

Sydney Trains: CBD stations upgrade

NSW Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian has announced plans to renovate Sydney CBD stations. \$100 million will be expended on **Wynyard** station – the third busiest on the system, and to become busier as the station for the major \$6 billion Barangaroo development. This will include an overhaul of the concourse and ticket area, including wider ticket gates, new signage to make it easier for patrons to move around, re-tiling, an upgrade of retail outlets, a new paint job and new light fittings.

Contracts for the redevelopment of the heritage listed underground **Museum** station are expected to be finalised by October. The Museum station is being upgraded under the state's \$770 million Transport Access Program. It will have new lifts, toilets, security upgrades and ramps installed as part of its refurbishment.

An \$8 million upgrade of **Town Hall** station – the busiest on the system - was announced in March. **Circular Quay** station is having a new lift installed.

Sydney Trains: Glenfield

New tracks and platforms at Glenfield station will be brought into use from 7 June 2014, in preparation for the opening of the Leppington line. Terminating Down City services via Granville will now turn around on platform 3. Down Marcarthur services via East Hills will use platform 4. Up City services via East Hills will use platform 1 and run over the new flyover. The existing route for City services via East Hills will no longer exist.

NSW Train Link: Bus connection to Jindabyne

NSW Train Link's franchised thrice weekly (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays) bus service Canberra-Cooma-Bombala will from 30 June be diverted to also run via Berridale, Jindabyne and Dalgety. The down service will therefore arrive 75 minutes later than formerly at 1600, and the up service depart 70 minutes earlier than formerly at 0650. Berridale and Jindabyne had been the biggest area of NSW hitherto without a regular public transport service (except during the winter snow season). The alteration is on trial for 12 months.

Sydney Trains: Nowra Electric Staff goes

Between 18 and 22 June the Electric Staff system of train control in the sections Kiama-Berry and Berry-Nowra/Bomaderry was abolished and replaced by Rail Vehicle Detection (RVD) system. This was the last Electric Staff system remaining in Australia on a passenger line. Other surviving Electric Staff lines are all ARTC NSW lines: Cootamundra West-Stockingbingal, Goobang Junction-Peak Hill-Narromine-Dubbo and Troy Junction-Elong Elong-Merrygoen. Presumably these will in time be replaced by ARTC's Advanced Train Management System, currently being developed.

Maldon Dombarton rail project given a red signal

Transport for New South Wales says there is no immediate need to build the Maldon to Dombarton railway. Its analysis is that the existing infrastructure is sufficient to manage short and medium-term rail capacity requirements. A spokesman says the project will only be considered for funding when traffic growth on the network and capacity restrictions make it a "commercially viable and necessary project."

Canberra Tramway future

The ACT Liberals are calling on the ACT Government to abandon its plan to build light rail in the wake of Federal budget cuts. They say the ACT is in for lean fiscal times and plans to build a \$614 million light rail network between Gungahlin and Civic should be dumped. But Ms Gallagher says the project will create jobs and boost economic activity at a time when it is most needed.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Station development

High-rise development may occur at railway stations, including Murrumbeena, under a confidential deal between the Victorian government and a consortium led by Metro Trains Melbourne. The deal for the proposed multibillion-dollar upgrade of the Pakenham-Cranbourne rail corridor includes a specific clause about development around sites identified for level crossing removals. The *Sunday Age* reported that MTM views the Pakenham-Cranbourne project - including property development - as the first of a series of schemes across the Melbourne network.

Fishermans Bend Tramway proposal

A tramway loop serving 120,000 people expected to live and work between South Melbourne and Fishermans Bend is being considered to link into the new-look metro rail system unveiled in the Victorian Budget. A major tram-train interchange called Montague will be developed in South Melbourne as part of the \$11 billion new Melbourne Rail Link project announced on 6 May. The hub will service a new heavy-rail underground line running between Southern Cross and South Yarra.

The *Herald Sun* reported that transport planners are looking at how the Montague interchange, to also take in the current route 109 tram line to Port Melbourne, could link into a significant tram loop around Fishermans Bend expected to cost hundreds of millions. The hub is ultimately planned to service a huge new urban population in the Fishermans Bend/South Melbourne development, as well as key destinations such as the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, South Wharf Direct Factory Outlet shops and South Melbourne Market.

Planning Minister Matthew Guy said the tram loop could be funded by a compulsory developer contribution of \$15,000 per unit in Fishermans Bend. "It's quite high, but there's a reason: because we need to put in place the infrastructure at the time of building it," he said. When you have that interconnecting with a heavy rail station you have a suburb of the future that can be built off a public transport base."

One possible route for the loop is along Williamstown Rd, Salmon St and Lorimer St. The currently underdeveloped area around the new Montague station - to be built at the intersection of the 109 tram line and Montague St - will eventually resemble Southbank, with a sprawl of apartment and office towers, the state government predicts. "The station will be in the area that has the highest density of the whole urban renewal precinct and near where we are building a school in Ferrars St," Mr Guy said. "I'm already considering permits for more than 9000 apartments."

V/Line: Regional Rail Link progress

The major 1.1 km bridge spanning the Maribyrnong River and the suburban train lines between South Kensington and Footscray has been completed.

On 30 March the new Regional Rail Link up and down lines and associated infrastructure between South Kensington and Sunshine, including new platforms 3 and 4 at Sunshine, was transferred from Metro Trains Melbourne to V/Line.

Since Saturday 26 April Ballarat line trains have used the new Regional Rail Link tracks and new platforms 3 and 4 at

Sunshine, (Circular S.14/8017 refers.) Various platform changes and line reroutings have been timetabled since 5 May at Southern Cross to facilitate RRL work (S.14/8016). Works carried out over the Easter-ANZAC Day period included:

- Works in the Arrivals Yard near North Melbourne station;
- Signalling and overhead works and removal of redundant track equipment between South Kensington and Footscray;
- Works to complete the Nicholson St bridge, Footscray;
- Works to complete platforms 3 and 4 at Sunshine and Footscray;
- Track works near Sunshine;
- Continued works on the Bendigo line grade separation on Anderson Road, Sunshine;
- Construction and testing of new signalling and communications equipment between Footscray and Sunshine;
- Signalling works on the Sunbury line;
- Removal of redundant signalling and communications equipment between Footscray and Deer Park;
- Modifications to train control systems to reflect changes along the Regional Rail Link network;
- Installing and commissioning equipment including CCTV cameras, passenger information displays and hearing loops at Sunshine and Footscray;
- Activating two new pedestrian crossings at Sydney St and Adelaide St Albion; and
- Tamping and track work near Robinsons Road, Deer Park.

V/Line: Albury line woes

V/Line trains on the NE line were replaced by buses on Monday evening 19 May and Tuesday morning and midday 20 May because the new ICE radio communication system stopped working. This new radio system is to be implemented nation-wide by mid-year.

V/Line: Gippsland line closedowns

Two lengthy periods of V/Line train replacement by buses are foreshadowed as work to upgrade the Dandenong line in Melbourne commences. The substitutions will occur from 1 to 5 June and from 14 to 19 June.

ARTC & V/Line: New passing lane and Albury trains

During May many V/Line Albury line trains were slowed down by a few minutes while ARTC continued its works on the Victorian NE line. The main work during this period was commissioning of the Kilmore East "passing lane" (ie, very extended crossing loop). This is 6.8 km long, between Keilor East and Donnybrook (also known as the Tullamarine Loop). Commissioning extended from 10 until 21 May. This included the final installation of track circuitry and signalling control systems as well as testing and certification of the signalling systems. During this period there was also ballast sledding, track lifting and tamping on the West track between Seymour and Wodonga.

Victorian population growth projections

The Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development projects that there will be more than 2.2 million people in country Victoria by 2051, according to the Victorian government's latest population projections released on 1 May. This will be an increase of 800,000, or 57%. Natural growth and an increase in people moving from Melbourne are expected to drive the increase.

The majority of the growth will occur in the 10 largest regional centres, headed by Greater Geelong (projected increase of 73,000), Ballarat (increase of 47,000) and Greater Bendigo (increase of 44,000). These three centres are expected to house approximately one third of Victoria's regional population. Parts of Gippsland, including the Baw Baw and Latrobe areas, have emerged as growth hot spots and major precincts are being planned for Warragul and Drouin to address future housing needs. Other major centres such as Shepparton and Warrnambool are also expected to have significant growth. Planning is also progressing on a long term project to house an additional 35,000 people near Wodonga.

Projections are that Melbourne will grow from 4.3 million now to 6 million in 2031 and to 7.8 million in 2051.

These population projections have clear implications for the continued growth of Metro Trains and V/Line services.

Adelaide Metro: Seaford and Tonsley lines

The timetable of 5 May 2014 inaugurated the re-opening of the Tonsley branch. It is available online at Adelaide Metro's website.

Seaford line trains run frequently in the peaks, partially express. Off-peak Seaford trains operate every fifteen minutes during the day. Down trains following Tonsley line trains run express to Woodlands Park. Up Seaford trains preceding Tonsley line trains run express from Woodlands Park. Evening trains are every 30 minutes until 2000 (down) or 2100 (up), then hourly. There are identical timetables on Saturdays and Sundays. Weekend Seaford trains operate every 30 minutes during the day and hourly in the evenings.

Tonsley line trains operate every 30 minutes in the peaks, and every 60 minutes during the day. As formerly, there are no services on the Tonsley line in the evenings or weekends.

Great Southern Railway: Ghan speed-up

At an uncertain date, possibly with the introduction of the ARTC Working Timetable of 6 April 2014, the southbound Ghan was speeded up. The Friday arrival in Adelaide is an hour earlier than formerly at 1130. The Monday arrival (which only runs in the northern tourist season from late May until September), no longer has three crosses with freight trains on ARTC track, and is now scheduled to arrive 75 minutes earlier at 1115.

Genessee & Wyoming: South Australian grain train cutback

Viterra, grain train handler in South Australia, and Genessee & Wyoming Australia, grain train operator, are reducing the number of grain train sets on the main SA network from three to two and on the Eyre Peninsula lines from two to one (albeit a bigger set). There is concern about an increased number of heavy grain trucks on local roads and fears that in future grain trains may only service silos on the interstate mainlines.

West Coast Wilderness Railway re-opening

The West Coast Wilderness Railway, Tasmania, is to re-open, in part, on 6 January – although only the section between Queenstown and Dubbil Barril. According to Infrastructure Minister, David O'Byrne, recent landslides in the area west of Dubbil Barril have made the region inaccessible by train. The Tasmanian government will be managing the half day excursions out of Queenstown until a private enterprise operator is appointed.

TransPerth: Northern Suburbs line extension

The opening of the extension of the Northern Suburbs line from Clarkson to Butler (7.5 km) is expected to occur in September, three months earlier than originally anticipated.

Western Australian Budget

The WA Budget presented on 8 May included an allocation of \$57 million for construction of the Aubin Grove station on the Mandurah line. The station is expected to open in December 2016. There was no funding for the MAX light rail system, nor for planned upgrades of city stations. Public transport fares were increased. The WA government indicated a long-term commitment to build a railway to Perth Airport. This 8.5 km line will run from Bayswater on the Midland line to Forrestfield and two stations at the Airport. Anticipated journey time from the Airport to the CBD would be 20 minutes.

Rio Tinto automatic operation

Rio Tinto Iron Ore commenced trials of automatic operation of heavy haul freight trains around the end of May. The initial run on the Hamersley line between Tom Price and the port at Dampier was described as 'a manned trial to test core functionality in an enhanced mode'. The company says that level crossings and wayside systems along the route 'have now been upgraded and enhanced to support the AutoHaul system', which is due to be fully operational in 2015.

AutoHaul will create 'the world's first fully-autonomous heavy haul, long-distance railway' and reduce the overall number of trains required to reach its expansion targets. On May 13 RTIO Chief Executive Andrew Harding announced a

'significant milestone' for its integrated iron ore mining project, when its Pilbara mines, railway and ports reached a run rate of 290 million tonnes a year, two months ahead of schedule. The next phase of the expansion towards 360 mtpa 'is on schedule for completion in a little over 12 months', he said, adding that this included the integration of AutoHaul.

Veolia Auckland: Slow Electrics

Speed controls on Auckland's new electric trains are overriding their drivers to make them slower than the diesel trains they replaced. There are reports of trains up to ten minutes late as a result. The train drivers' union says drivers are frustrated at being overridden by a new automatic European control system to restrict them to 10km/h when arriving at Britomart through its tunnel, or 15km/h when approaching Onehunga and Te Papapa stations from up to 200 metres away. That compares with a 25km/h limit for the former diesel trains at Onehunga and Britomart.

TranzScenic: Coastal Pacific

TranzScenic's Coastal Pacific train from Christchurch to Picton and vice versa is again not operating during the winter season. The last run was on Sunday 3 May. The next run will be on Friday 26 September.

Thanks to Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Len Regan, Lourie Smit, Roger Wheaton, Brendan Whyte, www.railpage.com.au, ABC news, *Age* (Melbourne), *Catchpoint* (South Australia), *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), *Herald* (Newcastle), *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), *New Zealand Herald*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Railway Digest*, *Transit Australia*, and the *Weekly Times* for Rail news.

BUS NEWS

Australia Capital Territory

\$1 early bird fares

From 5 to 30 May, ACTION undertook a trial of special \$1 early bird fares for those boarding a bus with a smartcard ticket before 0730 weekdays, a saving of \$1.84 on the regular adult single fare. Those who have set-up auto-top on their MyWay cards up can save a further 5 cents. The special fare was designed to encourage those working in the Parliamentary Triangle to try bus services before controversial paid parking is introduced in July as well as evaluate the effect on helping spread the peak period. As Canberra is renowned for its cold mornings over the winter months, with temperatures often at or below freezing, the fare should also encourage a few more to consider the bus over the comfort of their warm car. Early Bird fares have been in place on rail services in Melbourne since October 2007, with free travel available for those who touch off their myki at their destination before 0715, although ongoing publicity for the fare is non-existent.

ACTION has also recently held information sessions for Parliamentary Triangle workers outlining bus service options prior to the introduction of paid parking.

New South Wales

Regions 2 and 15 change hands

From 1 June, Busabout no longer operate in the Liverpool and Casula areas, ending 63 years of service to these suburbs by Neville's. Ingleburn Bus Service, trading as Interline, who previously only operated selected services in the region, has become the exclusive operator. Details of any timetable changes were not available at time of writing. Routes being transferred to Interline include 850 – 857, 864 – 867, 870 – 872 along with S9 and school services.

Busabout however have picked up Region 15 services covering Campbelltown and Camdem who previously were overseen by Busways. Busways had been operating services in this region since Dick Rowe purchased Campbelltown Buses in 1965, followed by the purchase of Higlatts Camden services 21 years later, and the rebranding to Busways in 1988. Routes changing hands include 31, 32, 38 – 40, 47, 49, 878 – 888, 890 – 896 & 899 plus all school services.

Busabout have introduced revised timetables across the region 15 network. A new service, 893 has been added between Narellan and Campbelltown serving Spring Farm with services operating every half hour Monday to Saturday and hourly on Sundays. The existing 893 in Spring Farm (Camden – Narellan) has been renumbered S17, an interesting choice as there is currently no S15 or S16 shopper hopper services and unlike most shopper which are limited to the interpeak, peak services will continue to be provided.

Other Busways changes

Western Sydney services operated by Busways in Region 1 received revised timetables on 18 May to improve ontime running, in conjunction with the introduction of two new services. 751 offers half hourly AM peak and hourly PM services linking Blacktown and Colebee along Richmond Road serving the Stonecutters Ridge housing estate while a full time 794 service has been introduced between Penrith and Glenmore Park providing access to Mulgoa Rise housing estate. Services run half hourly during peaks and hourly at other times. Interpeak services on T70 have also been extended from Norwest Business Park to Castle Hill.

The proposed runtimes for the new 794 timetable caused some unrest among drivers, with a group of walking off the job for four hours on 30 April to protest the new timetables

as being impossible to meet along with tight runtimes on existing timetables for other services, which the Transport Workers Union fears could lead to a major crash. Early indications however suggest buses on 794 are largely keeping to timetable. Drivers previously took similar industrial action in 2009.

Meanwhile, Busways' Central Coast operation added an additional 0845 Route 33 service between Gosford and Mains Rd West Gosford on 5 May, along with a Route 54 service ex Umina Beach Shops at 0700 to Woy Woy. Timing adjustments were also made to two Route 92 services towards Lake Haven in the AM peak.

Yet more Hillsbus extras

Hillsbus have added yet more weekday services across their network as of 2 June, including:

- 607X: 0610 ex Railway Square to Rouse Hill
- 619: 1440 & 1540 ex Castle Hill to Macquarie Park and 1530 & 1627 ex Macquarie Park to Castle Hill
- 630: 1421 ex Macquarie Park to Blacktown and 1716 ex Blacktown to Macquarie Park
- 642X: Interpeak services between Round Corner and City upgraded from 90 to 60 mins
- 700: 1545 ex Parramatta to Blacktown
- 705: 1538 ex Parramatta to Blacktown
- T65: 0907 ex Parramatta to Rouse Hill

Some minor changes have also been made to adjacent trips on Routes 630, 700 & 705. The post AM peak 620 service ex Cherrybrook at 0839 now operates via Lane Cove Tunnel as 620X, with the 'all stops' 620 variant via Epping Rd now operating once daily at 0545. It is believed that these changes are among the extra trips CDC offered to operate as part of their new contract for region 4 which takes effect in August (see September 2013 *Table Talk*).

M2 bus stop upgrades

Improvement works to four existing bus stops along the M2 motorway began on 5 May and will continue until June. During the works, stops close with passengers for Hillsbus Routes 602X, 607X, 611, 613X, 616X, 617X and Busways 740 required to travel on a special shuttle bus operating along adjacent Junction Rd to the nearest open stop.

Lane Cove turn ban

The introduction of a right turn ban from Central Ave into Little St, Lane Cove from 2 June has seen Sydney Buses 261 City services now operate the loop in reverse, and 265 to McMahons Wharf operate directly along Longueville Rd.

Northern Territory

City Interchange works

Darwin Bus Interchange was closed from 20 April until 11 May to allow urgent maintenance works to take place. Inbound services terminated at the Hilton Hotel stop on Mitchell St while outbound trips departed on Cavenagh St outside Woolworths.

South Australia

O-bahn trackwork

Due to trackwork on the O-bahn, services were diverted between Tea Tree Plaza and Paradise on 25 May from 0545 until 1600. Buses diverted via Smart Rd, North East Rd, Sudholz Rd, Darley Rd & Gameau Rd.

Victoria

Interchange upgrades

Werribee Plaza bus stops were relocated to the north-eastern end of the centre adjacent to Derrimut Rd on 14 April to allow the old interchange to the south of the centre, parallel to Heaths Rd to close as part of a major extension of the complex. Timetables were unchanged, although

customer advice suggests delays may be expected, compounding delays as a result of recent reductions to speed limits from 70km/h to 60km/h on local arterial roads in Wyndham (see March *Table Talk*). Route 437 services towards Werribee no longer traverse Barber Dr however the only stop closed was located at the corner of Derrimut Rd.

Centre expansion has also commenced at Northland, with the interchange moving from north of the centre to a new location adjacent to Murrays Rd on 28 April. This new interchange will speed up trips on the Red Orbital 903 service by removing the significant detour to serve the former interchange.

Planning is also underway on a \$13 million upgrade of the Young St bus interchange at Frankston which will see the consolidation of bus bays to north of the station exit (currently there are 15 bays stretching over 250m from south of Wells St to Ross Smith Ave East, some which are only used once or twice an hour), use of a nearby layover facility to prevent buses clogging the smaller interchanges, replacement of a pedestrian crossing outside the station with two scatter crossings at intersections, wider footpaths and landscaping works. The plans however fall short of initial promises made by the Liberal government in opposition that would have included an upgraded station building, multi-story commuter parking, improved access to the TAFE and affordable housing in the precinct.

Meanwhile, \$406,000 is being spent to give the interchange at Moorabbin a long overdue facelift, as part of a state and Kingston council partnership.

Geelong footy buses dropped

It appears that special footy buses trailed after evening AFL games at Simmonds Stadium in Geelong during the 2013 season proved unsuccessful, with no special services provided for the 23 May game between Geelong and North Melbourne. The McHarrys website also failed to advise in the special bus to Geelong via St Albans Park that runs after weekend day matches would be provided for this game.

RRL extras return

Transdev once again provided additional unscheduled services on Route 216 and 220 between Sunshine and City during the Regional Rail Link shutdown that took incorporated the three working days between Easter and Anzac Day. Unofficial reports however suggest the number of extra trips that ran was hampered due to a lack of available buses and drivers due to the latest works occurring on school weekdays.

Booklet timetable reprints continue

Further to the recent developments of the move towards to the more simplistic A3 timetable format, selected timetable booklets for popular services continue to be reprinted in the standard format, with 2014 reprints recently spotted for Cranbourne Transit' Routes 789, 790 & 791 (Frankston to Cranbourne West) along with Transdev's 901 (Frankston to Melbourne Airport) service. The small print date on the rear cover along with updating on the internal adverts to promote myki auto top-up identifies the reprinted stock. Unfortunately previous errors within the 901 timetable appear to have been carried over to this latest reprint (see March 2013 and November 2013 *Table Talk*).

Western Australia

June changes

Transperth introduced a new Route 512 service on 1 June, linking Murdoch and Spearwood via North Lake and Coolbellup. A 15 to 30 min frequency is offered during peaks with hourly headways at other times. Route 513 (Murdoch – Fremantle) has been modified, no longer operating along

Waverley Rd, Romeo Rd or Cordelia Ave, with the Alonso St deviation cancelled and deviations to Hale House and Rinaldo Cr subject to future patronage reviews. An additional shoulder peak trip operates in either direction.

Timetable adjustments have also occurred on 511 (Murdoch – Fremantle), 525 - 526 (Cockburn Central – Hammond Park) while 522 (Cockburn Central – Spearwood) has been reduced to two return services from the existing 90 to 120

min frequency, although extensions to Workpower have been retained.

Updated timetables include 37 (511 – 513), 120 (522 & 532) and 122 (525 & 526).

Thanks to: Mike Marshall, Peter Parker, Lourie Smit and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*.

FERRY NEWS

Tasmanian ferries – small and big

After many years of lobbying, residents and visitors travelling to and from **Bruny Island** have been successful in securing a second vessel for peak period service between Kettering and North Bruny. Long delays in waiting to board the existing ferry “Mirambeena” are legend among Southern Tasmanian travellers and visitors. The second vessel operated from Easter 2014.

Tasmania’s “Ferry across the Mersey” will be pulled off the water at the end of June because it is no longer financially viable. The quaint Torquay Ferry from East Devonport to **Devonport** has operated for 180 years and is believed to be Australia’s oldest continuously running public ferry service.

In recent years, it was rebadged the Spirit of Devonport and painted to match the Spirit of Tasmania ferries. But owners Grant and Jan Bingley say the service is not used as much as it once was and is making a loss. It now makes about 100 crossings a day compared to 300 a few years ago. The loss of a \$25,000 State government subsidy two years ago also hit hard.

The Tasmanian government will fund the refurbishment of TT line’s two trans-Bass Strait “**Spirit of Tasmania**” ferries.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Ian Cooper and the *Daily Telegraph* for Ferry news.

AIR NEWS

International

Dubai Airport is now the world’s busiest international airport with 18.36 million international passengers in the first quarter of 2014. Second was London Heathrow with 16 million, then Hong Kong and Paris.

Commencing 29 September **Qantas** will replace B747s with A380s on the Sydney-Dallas run. By doing this they will eliminate the Brisbane refueling stop on the return. The service will then operate six days a week by omitting the Tuesday flight.

Hawaiian Airlines increased services between Brisbane and Honolulu from one to four a week from 31 March.

United increased its Melbourne-Los Angeles non-stop service from six times a week to daily from 12 March 2015.

Etihad Airways has launched The Residence, a private, 125 sq ft, three-room self-contained cabin on the upper forward deck of its new A380 megaliners featuring a living room, double bedroom, separate ensuite shower and a

dedicated butler. A flight from Abu Dhabi to London will cost about \$21,500.

Domestic

Qantas will freeze its domestic capacity in the first three months of the new financial year. Hitherto it had strenuously made efforts to maintain capacity at 65% of domestic market share against its rival Virgin Australia. The change in Qantas’ approach comes as it is reported to be facing a record loss approaching \$1 billion.

Tigerair will discontinue its Sydney-Alice Springs, Melbourne-Alice Springs, and Melbourne-Sunshine Coast services from 22 July. Aircraft will be redeployed to increase Sydney-Gold Coast services from twice to four times daily. However **Virgin** will reduce its frequency on the Sydney-Gold Coast route from up to twelve daily to up to nine daily.

Thanks to Victor Isaacs, Tris Tottenham, the *Australian, Canberra Times* and *Daily Telegraph* for Air news.

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