



TABLE TALK

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TOP TABLE TALK - WESTERN SYDNEY

New metro between Sydney CBD and Parramatta?

A new metro line between Sydney City and Parramatta has been suggested as the next possible major public transport project initiated by the NSW government. Planning is believed to be underway. The line would bring relief to Sydney's Western rail corridor and service growth areas, such as the Bays Precinct around Rozelle and the former industrial lands at Camellia. The project could also include a future expansion to Badgerys Creek airport to the west, and is likely to also contemplate an eastward expansion to Maroubra and Long Bay. But one option being considered is cutting back the scope of the proposed light rail line between Parramatta and Strathfield via Olympic Park.

The line could possibly be included in the Transport for NSW masterplan, due for release in 2017. But the pressures and the thinking behind the project stretch back decades. A metro line between Parramatta and the city, extending to the eastern suburbs, was included in former director-general for rail Ron Christie's report into the Sydney train system in 2001. And proposals for a "west metro" project and an eastern extension were also developed under former Labor Premier Morris Iemma in 2007, though subsequently scrapped.

As well as relieving the Western line, the proposal would support the government's land and housing agenda. The chief executive of UrbanGrowth NSW, responsible for the Bays Precinct development, has said that the project would be a "disaster" without major new public transport.

NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance said on 7 September there was "no doubt that there is going to be the need for additional rail capacity" between Parramatta and the City in the longer term. [However,] the government has made no decision about western metro – let's be clear on that. There is some private sector interest out there, absolutely," he said. "But what is going to motivate a future decision around this is actually the capacity of the existing T1 Western rail line, because it reaches full capacity by 2030 – you can't put any more people on the trains." The Baird government has promised to increase the number of

trains running each hour by two to 20 on the western line by 2019 "to try to build capacity into a very constrained rail line". "That is our focus at the moment but, given the growth in the city's west, the realistic long-term outcome is going to have to be considered," he said.

The Western line is the busiest on Sydney's rail network. The most recent government statistics show average loads on the line in the morning peak increased 21% to 134% between September 2014 and September 2015. Passengers begin to suffer from overcrowding when trains have loads of 135%, which is the benchmark used by transport officials.

A joint state and federal discussion paper into western Sydney's rail needs is also expected to be released soon. It will canvass a wide range of rail options including the possibility of a link to the proposed Badgerys Creek Airport which is due to open in 2025. While not wanting to pre-empt the paper, Mr Constance said: "I have always felt that connectivity from cities out west to the airport is probably the number-one priority in terms of the future success of the airport."

Transport for NSW have released a discussion paper on rail options for western Sydney at <http://www.westernsydneyrail.transport.nsw.gov.au/> They are looking for comment from the public. It is possible to download the 6.5Mb report which then allows you to read and interpret it at leisure before responding in whatever way. Submissions on the discussion paper close on 28 October.

Badgerys Creek Airport: Rail access

On 16 September, Federal Minister for Urban Infrastructure Paul Fletcher released an options paper for rail access to Badgerys Creek Airport in Western Sydney. One proposal envisages an ultra-modern train capable of speeds of up to 160km/h for 30,000 passengers an hour to the City in 27 minutes. This would require a tunnel between the CBD and Parramatta, with stops at the Bays Precinct and Olympic Park. The single-deck configuration would then link Parramatta to Badgerys, a journey taking just 15 minutes.

Funding models would need to be developed. Options for infrastructure bonds and private sector involvement may be available. The study reveals that the most expensive option could cost close to \$25 billion. The report cites the direct rail option as providing the quickest link between the two CBDs of Sydney and Parramatta, as well as connecting to the new airport at Badgerys.

Other options include a link between Badgerys and the southwest rail link with a travel time to the CBD of 55 minutes, or linking the airport to the Sydney Metro Northwest, which would give commuters a 35-minute ride from the northwest to the airport. Further options include a direct link between the airport and Liverpool, or a link between the airport and the Western Line at St Marys — a 48-minute trip between Badgerys and

the CBD. There is also an option for a north-south link between Macarthur and St Marys via the new airport.

Converting Sydney's existing airport train line between Central and Revesby to single-deck metro trains is an option. The possibility of separating the Airport Line from the suburban network, and running a metro-style shuttle, emerged in an options paper prepared by the state and federal governments referred to in the preceding item. This could allow an extra 12 trains an hour from the outer south-west to operate on the congested City Circle Line, the paper found.

Mr Fletcher said communities will be able to have their say in the final decision on the rail options. Submissions close on 28 October. The federal Labor opposition, which also backs the construction of the airport, has said rail options must be a prerequisite for the airport.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Australian transport forecast

Australia's transport sector has recovered after the impact of the Global Financial Crisis with the nation's freight task likely to grow by 26% over the next decade according to a new research report published on 9 September by the National Transport Commission (NTC). The Who Moves What Where report provides information about the nature of Australia's freight and passenger movements, and will help those involved in infrastructure, planning and investment, operational improvements and regulatory changes. The report forecasts that over the next decade:

- Domestic freight will increase by 26% and
- Domestic passenger movements will increase by 19%.

ARTC: Inland Rail project

Macquarie Bank has been awarded a contract to advise the Federal government on its proposed Inland Freight Rail Project. Macquarie's role is expected to consider private funding options, including a public-private-partnership and other structures, and test the ideas more generally with the private market. The Federal government is seeking private sector interest in the design, construction, delivery and financing of the Inland Rail project. ARTC has also sought expressions of interest for technical engineering and environmental approval services for the project.

The Federal Government has invited companies to register interest in the design, construction, delivery and financing of the project. ARTC is seeking expressions of interest for technical engineering and environmental approval services.

Great Southern Rail: Future

Sixteen months after purchasing a 70% controlling share in Great Southern Rail, Allegro Funds has sold this to Quadrant Private Equity for \$200 million. Under Allegro ownership, GSR doubled its earnings by emphasising the tourist appeal of the Indian Pacific and Ghan. There remains a number of administrative matters to complete, but the transaction is expected to be finalised in mid-October. Established in 1996, Quadrant's investments cover retail, healthcare,

media, consumer foods, financial services and other sectors.

Queensland Rail CityTrain: Kippa-Ring line opening 4 October

The railway from Petrie to Kippa-Ring opened on Tuesday 4 October. On the preceding day, Queen's Birthday holiday in Queensland, there were free trains. The timetable is available online at <http://translink.com.au/about-translink/projects-and-initiatives/moreton-bay-rail-link> The off-peak frequency is every 30 minutes; more frequently in peaks. Most trains run through from Kippa-Ring to Springwood Central and v.v. On Mondays to Fridays there will be one train all the way from Rosewood (0730) to Kippa-Ring (0945). Caboolture trains now all run express Petrie-Northgate-Eagle Junction-Bowen Hills. Altered train services and the new bus network were outlined in the proposals reported in the December 2015 *Table Talk*.

Queensland Rail CityTrain: Central station

Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk on 5 September announced a \$67 million, three year revamp of Brisbane Central station. The upgrade will provide a new roof, which will extend over the Edward Street end of the concourse, and modernisation of the platforms, including ceiling, wall and floor treatments and lighting, level entry boarding, extended cover on platforms 2/3 and 3/4, and new passenger information displays and seating. New lifts will be installed, along with an additional escalator from the concourse to ANZAC Square, to reduce congestion during peak periods. There will be improved staff facilities.

Sydney Trains: System enhancements

A new turnback, west of Parramatta, will be commissioned on the weekend of 15/16 October.

Control of signaling on the Eastern Suburbs line and Erskineville Junction was transferred to Sydenham signaling centre on the weekend of 15/16 October.

Wynyard Walk, an 800 metre walkway between Wynyard station and the Barangaroo development, opened on 20 September.

Sydney Trains: 17 October timetable

The following improvements will be introduced from Monday 17 October:

T4 Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line: Three additional all stops trains between Bondi Junction and Hurstville in the PM peak, doubling the number of departures from Central between 1515 and 1545. The new services will enable four existing Cronulla and Waterfall bound services to stop at fewer stations, resolving crowding and reducing journey times for by up to eight minutes.

South Coast line: More frequency, capacity and reduced journey times on Illawarra line services between 1515 and 1545. Four express services stopping at Austinmer Station will be permanently introduced into the timetable following a recent review.

Blue Mountains line: The 1518 from Central to Lithgow will operate as an eight car train instead of a four car train, doubling the number of seats.

NSW Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Andrew Constance said, "Travel patterns are changing. There

are now more day trippers, school children and those working flexible hours who want to leave the city earlier so a big part of these improvements are to cater for the changing needs of customers. We will continue to monitor the network to identify where we can deliver further improvements to current services."

ARTC WTT 16 October

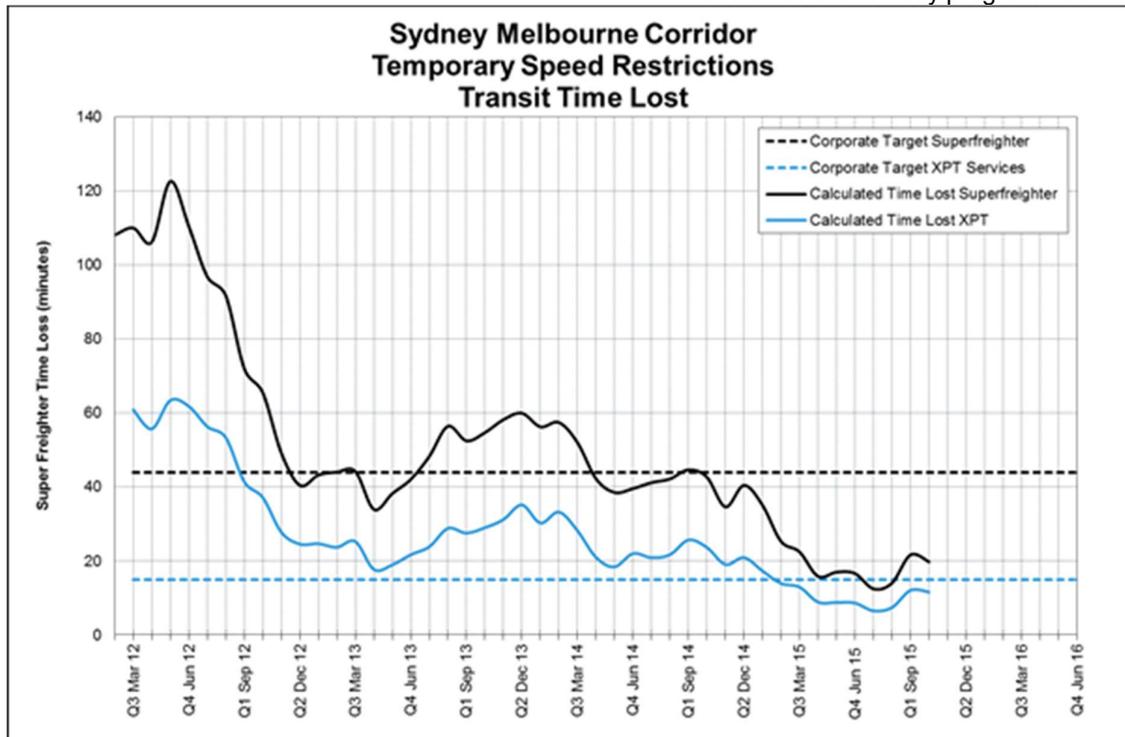
A new Working Timetable for ARTC has been issued with effect from 16 October (as predicted in last month's *Table Talk*). It can be accessed, as usual, on their website at

<http://www.artc.com.au/customers/operations/mtp/2016-06-12/> The new WTT includes new times of GSR's Ghan, but not new times of the Indian Pacific.

ARTC: Southern line

ARTC conducted a large number of minor civil engineering works along the NSW Southern line from Moss Vale to Albury from 2 until 6 September.

ARTC provides the following graph of the effect of speed restrictions on the Southern line since track, mainly ballast, problems became apparent in 2012, and since the remedy program was implemented:



Aurizon: Botany-Enfield shuttles

In early September Aurizon commenced operation of a shuttle from the Port of Botany to Aurizon's intermodal facility at Enfield, western Sydney. Initially, the service is operating six times a week, with plans to increase over the medium term to accommodate customer demand.

Wagga2 freight hub

The contract for an upgrade of the Wagga Wagga freight hub was signed in late August. The first stage involves the construction of a grade separated underpass of the Main Southern Railway and will improve vehicular movement between the Terminal,

the Olympic Highway, the existing Bomen Industrial precinct and Byrnes Road. The broader project is likely to also see the delivery of grain terminal facilities, a container terminal and rail infrastructure, ensuring this region is able to thrive and survive. Works are expected to be completed by mid-2017.

Canberra Tram

On 1 September the ACT government announced the second stage of its light rail network will go to Woden, making a major pre-election play by taking its flagship infrastructure project to Canberra's south. The planned 11-km route will take trams across Lake Burley Griffin via the Commonwealth Avenue bridge, through the

Parliamentary Triangle, and down Adelaide Avenue to the Woden town centre. The route, at this stage, will not extend to Mawson. It is being dubbed the "north-south spine", a long light rail network stretching from Gungahlin to Woden, which will integrate with rapid and local buses, later tram stages, and other transport options to service the rest of the city.

Building from the City to Woden is expected to cost roughly the same as from Gungahlin to the City, given the similar distances, although no detailed costing work has yet been done and a business case is not yet complete. The government has consulted and conducted pre-feasibility studies on stage two, but says a business case will not be ready until next term. Contracts are planned to be signed during the next term of government.

The path south is not without its challenges. Commonwealth Avenue Bridge may require strengthening, and will at least require comprehensive structural assessments. It will also require the approval of the federal planning authority, the National Capital Authority, for the portion of the route that travels through the Parliamentary Triangle. The NCA has already signalled that overhead lines should not be used through the triangle, and Labor, if re-elected, would quickly begin talks with the Authority to address concerns it may have.

The route services national land and federal public service buildings, giving the ACT government a better bargaining position when it asks the Federal government to continue funding the project in its second stage. Labor hopes that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's generally supportive position on public transport and transformative infrastructure may help convince the Federal government to open its wallet, if he is still in power.

It remains unclear whether work would start immediately following the completion of stage one in 2018-19, although the government is keen to ensure there is minimal delay between the stages to ensure its employment pipeline continues.

Victorian vision

The Rail Futures Institute presented a report on 5 September advocating construction over a 25 year period of:

- A high speed railway from Melbourne to Geelong,
- A Geelong-Ballarat-Bendigo standard gauge line,
- High speed upgrades,
- Upgraded stations,
- Quadruplication from Caulfield to Dandenong,
- Electrification to Bacchus Marsh, with quadruplication from Sunshine to Melton,
- A high speed railway to Melbourne Airport, partially in tunnel, and extending via Clarkfield to the Bendigo line, and via Wallan to the Seymour line.

The Rail Futures Institute is an independent, non-partisan group formed to advocate sustainable rail solutions for public transport and freight problems with

a membership of rail professionals, engineers and economists.

Victorian present

Stage one of the Murray Basin rail project was completed in August with more than 175,000 new sleepers and 34 km of new rail on the Mildura-Yelta and Hopetoun lines. Stage two has begun involving conversion to standard gauge to Yelta and Murrayville, plus re-opening of the Maryborough-Ararat line. The main work will involve the closure of the Yelta and Murrayville lines for seven months from August 2017. Stages 3 and 4, involving conversion to SG of lines to Robinvale and Sea Lake, is dependent upon Commonwealth government funding.

V/Line: Additional trains

Public Transport Victoria is currently undertaking consultation on the timetable for the extra trains to Warrnambool, Shepparton and Maryborough from **early 2017** as funded in the 2016/2017 State budget, see <https://getinvolved.ptv.vic.gov.au/test-project19111> Both Warrnambool and Shepparton trains would increase from three to four on weekdays and from two to three on weekends. Maryborough weekday trains would increase from one to two. There would effectively be a common timetable to Warrnambool and Shepparton on both days of the weekend with the proposed changes.

Warrnambool

- * New 0905 up on weekdays, arriving Melbourne 1233
- * New 1713 down on weekdays, arriving Warrnambool 2054
- * 0550 up on Saturdays rescheduled to 0740, arriving Melbourne 1106
- * 0725 up on Sundays rescheduled to 0740, arriving Melbourne 1106
- * 0900 down on Sundays rescheduled to 0700, arriving Warrnambool 1046
- * New 1130 up on Sundays, arriving Melbourne 1457
- * New 1300 down on Sundays, arriving Warrnambool 1630.

It is not clear what would happen to the current Sunday afternoon return bus between Warrnambool and Geelong, which is the only weekly service stopping at Pirron Yallock.

Shepparton

- * 1531 or 1631 down Seymour services on weekdays extended onto Shepparton
- * 0704 up on Saturdays and 0715 up on Sundays rescheduled to 0830, arriving Melbourne at 1100
- * New 1230 up on weekends, arriving Melbourne 1455
- * 1605 up on Saturdays and 1705 on Sundays rescheduled to 1630, arriving Melbourne at 1900
- * 0930 down on Sundays rescheduled to 0912, as per Saturday
- * New 1212 down on weekends, arriving Shepparton 1500

Maryborough

- * 0917 weekday down Wendouree would instead travel to Maryborough, arriving 1138

* 1552 weekday up Ballarat would originate at Maryborough at 1459.

Somerton freight hub

DP [Dubai Ports] World Australia and Austrak plan to establish an intermodal freight hub at Austrak's business park at Somerton, 23 km north of Melbourne, to be known as Somerton Rail Port. It is expected to be fully customs bonded and to be connected by rail shuttle with the Port of Melbourne.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Patronage

Public Transport Victoria data shows that 51 out of 251 morning peak-hour trains are packed above capacity, the highest level in six years. Every second Craigieburn train in the morning was overcrowded when an annual survey of each line was carried out in May. The Cranbourne / Pakenham line, Melbourne's busiest train route, was so congested in the morning that 47% of commuters had to ride on an overcrowded train. PTV's data showed 37% of early Dandenong trains carried too many passengers, up from 28% a year ago. On the Alamein, Glen Waverley and Williamstown lines no morning trains were overcrowded.

Melbourne Metro tunnel

Construction of Melbourne's Metro Tunnel project commenced in late September with early works in the CBD. John Holland, which holds the \$324 million early works contract for the project, began work to move up to 100 utility services under the city's surface. The contract also includes excavating the 11-storey deep shafts next to Swanston St to enable the construction of the two new city stations.

Melbourne: Closure to remove Sunbury line level crossings 4-10 October

An extended closure along the Sunbury/Bendigo line between Sunshine and Sunbury from 4 until 30 October will occur so a pair of level crossings can be removed and \$46 million in extra rail upkeep can take place. Victoria's Level Crossing Removal Authority will have roughly 700 construction workers working to lower the rail line below Main and Furlong Roads in St Albans. St Albans and Ginifer stations will be rebuilt, and redundant signals, tracks and overhead wiring will also be removed. A consortium of CPB Contractors, Aurecon and Arcadis, which also includes VicRoads, Public Transport Victoria and Metro Trains Melbourne, is undertaking the level crossing removals and station construction work. V/Line will also use the almost month-long stoppage to undertake a \$46 million work program to replace sleepers and ballast and to renew rail bridges along 380 kms of track to Bendigo and beyond.

Buses will replace Metro trains on the Sunbury line, and V/Line trains on the Bendigo line, during the stoppage. The list of cancelled V/Line trains during this period runs to ten pages of their amending "S" circular.

Melbourne: More level crossings to go

The Victorian Government has called for called for Expressions of Interest for two new major packages of level crossing removals involving 11 more level crossings. These will be financed from the 50 year

lease of the Port of Melbourne on a 50-year lease announced on 19 September. There will then be 37 level crossings removed or underway by 2018.

As part of the North-Western Package, Camp Road in Campbellfield and Buckley Street in Essendon will be fast-tracked. Work will start next year and both will be gone by 2019. The North-Western package also includes the removal of level crossings at Glenroy Road in Glenroy, Bell Street in Coburg, and Moreland Road in Brunswick.

Construction of the level crossing removal at Kororoit Creek Road in Williamstown North and the partial duplication of the Altona Loop will also begin next year, as part of the Western Package of crossing removals, the pair said. The Western package also includes the removal of crossings at Abbots Road in Dandenong South, Aviation Road in Laverton, Ferguson Street in Williamstown, and Cherry and Werribee Streets in Werribee.

Melbourne: Frankston line

The Down and Centre lines between Caulfield and Moorabbin were returned to service from 1 August. The Up line was returned to service from 5 September. Peak express services have been restored following the substantial completion of large-scale level crossing removal works.

Melbourne: South Yarra

Fewer trains will stop at South Yarra if the \$11 billion Melbourne Metro Tunnel project bypasses the area, Victorian government documents show, and there will initially be longer waiting times for passengers there. The rail tunnel design does not provide for a station at South Yarra, diving below the surface just metres from the existing station and re-emerging at South Kensington. The government's 2015 *Customer Outcome and Economic Assessment Report* concedes that not building a station at South Yarra as part of the project would reduce the number of services, from a train every 75 seconds to every two minutes. The government argues it would cost almost \$1 billion more to build a new South Yarra station, and that the area is already superbly serviced by public transport.

Adelaide Metro: Outer Harbor closure

The Outer Harbor and Grange lines will be closed and replaced by buses for about three weeks in January 2017 for major grade separation works for about 3 km from Bowden to Croydon. This, combined with the underpass under the ARTC line near North Adelaide, will provide nearly 4 km of new line.

Aurizon: New traffic

Aurizon has a five year contract with K & S Freighters to haul approximately 20,000 containers per annum from Sydney to Perth.

Aurizon has secured its first coal haulage contract in the Southern coalfields of NSW for the railing of 800,000 tonnes per annum from Wollongong Coal's Wongawilli Colliery to Port Kembla Coal Terminal.

South Australia: Mineral traffic

SA intrastate operator, Genessee and Wyoming Australia, has, since early July, been operating the following ore trains for Cu River Co. from Rankin Dam on the north-south line:

	Wed	Fri	Sun
Rankin Dam	0410	0855	1705
Port Augusta	1500-1550	2105-2200	0345-0405 Mon
Outer Harbor	2245	0420 Sat	1000
	Mon	Thurs	Sat
Outer Harbor	1805	0700	
Dry Creek			1910
Port Augusta	0100-0120 Tues	1315-1430	0040 Sun
Rankin Dam	0950	2210	1000

Mineral wagons used on the former coal traffic from Leigh Creek to Port Augusta have been sold to NSW based Consolidated Rail Leasing (a subsidiary of Southern Shorthaul Railroad), for possible new traffics in the eastern states.

GSR: Alterations

GSR states that from 14 September the schedule of the winter ultra-touristy southbound **Ghan** is altered:

	Former times	Altered times
Darwin dp	1000 Wed	1000
Katherine ar	1340	1415
Katherine dp	1820	1845
Alice Springs ar	1000Thurs	0910
Alice Springs dp	2145	2145
Coober Pedy ar	0900 Fri	0900
(bus from Manguri)		
Coober Pedy dp	1940	1940
Adelaide ar	1250 Sat	1045

The eastbound **Indian Pacific** is also altered:

	Former times	Altered times
Perth dp	0900 Sun	1000
Kalgoorlie ar	2050	2050
Kalgoorlie dp	0120 Mon	0120
Rawlinna ar	0600	600
Rawlinna dp	0805	805
Cook ar	1110	1445
Cook dp	1310	1545
Adelaide ar	0720 Tues	0720
Adelaide dp	1015	1015
Broken Hill ar	1725	1725
Broken Hill dp	2000	1930
Sydney ar	1130 Wed	1107

The new times for the Ghan are reflected in the ARTC Working Timetables of 16 October, but not the altered times for the Indian Pacific.

TransPerth: Low-patronage stations

The Public Transport Authority of WA is considering closing “underperforming or inefficient” stations. “We need to consider the impact of a train full of passengers pulling up at a low-boarding station where often not a single passenger gets on or off,” PTA spokesman David Hynes said. For example, typical

weekday boardings at Mt Lawley were 345 and were 524 at Meltham, compared to 1516 at Maylands and 1833 at Bayswater. Mr Hynes said there were no immediate plans to close any stations. He said the PTA monitored the performance of its network, including population shifts, land-use plans, patronage forecasts and the introduction of new services. “At the same time, we are very conscious of providing high quality and responsive services that best meet community needs,” he said. “We know that time is an important factor for people when deciding whether to use public transport versus the car.” He said stopping at a low-boarding station added 90 seconds to the journey of passengers on the train “which, in economic and personal terms, represents lost productivity and opportunity”. He said this was particularly relevant on the older Midland, Fremantle and Armadale lines where some stations were only a few hundred metres apart. Mr Hynes said any decision to close a station would require significant work and consultation with the community.

Pilbara railway

A plan by Mineral Resources Ltd to build a “sky-rail” to transport iron ore across the Pilbara has been given the green light by the WA Environmental Protection Authority. The 330 km railway would run from the Iron Valley project, north-west of Newman, to Port Hedland port. It would cross more than 20 mining tenements, including rail lines owned by Fortescue Metals Group, Roy Hill and BHP Billiton, four native title claims, seven pastoral leases and Crown and state government-managed land. It would be up to two metres above ground and some areas could be more than six metres high.

“The benefits of the rail design is that it not only minimises the cut and fill earthworks activities required during construction, but also results in less disturbance to natural landscapes, such as surface water features and fauna habitat, as well as infrastructure, such as existing road and rail,” MRL’s website says. “An added advantage for the BOTS rail structure is it is almost completely re-locatable once a resource/reserve is completely exhausted.”

MRL still requires approvals from several other regulatory authorities, traditional owners and other tenure and pastoral lease holders before it can commence construction.

Mineral Resources Limited is Australia’s fifth largest iron ore producer, exporting 10 million tonnes of iron ore in the 2014-15 financial year from sites at Yilgarn and Iron Valley.

Who operates what? New Zealand

The May 2016 edition of our sister magazine, the *Times*, pages 11 to 16, contained an article entitled *Who Operates What*. That article was an attempt to disentangle and explain the very complicated ownership and control structure of 7 Australian railways. The article covered Infrastructure owners/controllers, passenger operators, and freight operators. This item continues that article for New Zealand. NZ railways are simple compared to Australia.

Infrastructure: Almost all public railway infrastructure is owned and controlled by KiwiRail, a government entity. The only exception is the tourist carrying Taieri Gorge Railway from near Wingatui (on the South Island Main Trunk) to Middlemarch, which has been owned by Dunedin City Council since 1990.

Passenger operators: The very few remaining long-distance passenger trains in NZ (Northern Explorer, Capital Connection, Coastal Pacific and Tranz Alpine) are operated by KiwiRail.

Auckland suburban trains (electrified network plus the Papakura Pukekohe DMU shuttle) are operated by Transdev, formerly Veolia, formerly Connex.

Wellington suburban trains (electrified network plus diesel hauled Wellington-Masterton trains), are since July 2016, also operated by Transdev.

The significant tourist train operations from Dunedin are operated by Dunedin Railways, daily on the Taieri

Gorge Railway owned by Dunedin City Council, and almost daily north to either Waitati, Palmerston or Oamaru on a KiwiRail mainline.

Freight operator: All freight operation is by KiwiRail.

Sleeping in Europe

With the annual European timetable change in December, DB German Railways will withdraw most of its remaining overnight sleeper services. However, most of these services will be picked up by ÖBB Austrian Railways. ÖBB will market their existing and new sleeper services under the name Nightjet.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Hilaire Fraser, Scott Ferris, Craig Halsall, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Len Regan, *European Rail Timetable*, www.railexpress.com.au, www.railpage.com.au, *Catchpoint* (National Railway Museum), ABC News, *Age*, *Australian*, *Canberra Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* for Rail news.

BUS NEWS

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT government has revealed a new bus network that will deliver 80 new bus drivers and seven new rapid routes over the next four years. The network, which goes head to head with a new rapid network drawn up by the ACT Liberals in March, includes a rapid bus service running directly from Belconnen to Gungahlin starting next year. Another will connect Woden to the city via Barton. The existing blue rapid from Tuggeranong to Belconnen is being extended to Lanyon in the south and Kippax in the north. The government, like the Liberals, are promising to run a public bus service to the airport. In 2020, two rapid buses will go directly to the Canberra Airport – one from Belconnen via the city, and the other from Lanyon, at the far end of the Tuggeranong Valley, Transport Minister Meeghan Fitzharris said.

The new routes will add \$26 million a year to the cost of the city's buses when they're all in place in 2020. At the moment, buses cost about \$120 million a year.

With the Liberals releasing a plan for six new rapid bus routes in March, the Labor and Liberal parties have made tit-for-tat announcements on roads and buses. Both released "city loop" bus plans – the government's beginning its city loop in July, and the Liberals' are promising a wider city loop, also heading to the Parliamentary Triangle.

Ms Fitzharris's bus changes are decisions that have been made and will be incorporated in the coming budget update, rather than an election promise. It costs the budget \$3.6 million in 2017-18 when two rapid routes begin, then \$9.5 million the following year, with two new services, \$16 million when another rapid is added in 2019, and \$26 million when the final two are added in 2020. Ms Fitzharris said the new routes incorporated the 1.2 million kms of bus travel each year that would be freed up by the 12km light rail line from Gungahlin to the city. The line will replace buses from Gungahlin to the city in 2018.

While both parties are promising more rapid services – which have fewer stops and run every 15 minutes or more, Labor's plan differs from the Liberals in the detail of the routes. The Liberals drew up their network based on how people drive from centre to centre in Canberra – proposing buses along the most direct car routes. But Ms Fitzharris said the Liberals' idea that bus routes should follow car routes was flawed. Instead, the city needed public transport corridors, she said.

Whereas the Liberals have proposed a direct bus route up the Tuggeranong parkway, Ms Fitzharris said the parkway was too busy already to carry more buses. Instead, the Labor's rapid service would travel along Athllon Drive and through Mawson and the Woden town centre. The Liberals also proposed a rapid service that looped into the city along Athllon Drive and back to Tuggeranong via the Monaro Highway and Hume. But Labor says the route is not justified by demand. The Liberals have proposed one rapid to the airport, whereas Labor is planning two. Labor criticised the Liberals' plan when it was released, and raised doubts about the airport proposal, given that the airport already has a privately contracted bus service and the airport's agreement is needed for any public bus service there. But Ms Fitzharris said the government would continue to talk with the airport, which wanted to be sure that public buses would be as frequent as its own service. "We will work with the airport over coming years to negotiate the best outcome for an airport bus link. But this is our plan, and the airport are open to it."

Ms Fitzharris said the debate about Canberra being a car-centric city was over and she was already planning for more rapid bus routes into Molonglo and Gungahlin beyond 2020 as the population grows. The rapid buses were hugely popular, with more than four million passengers using the blue rapid from Tuggeranong and Belconnen to the city, and more than one million

using the red rapid from Fyshwick and Gungahlin to the city in the last 12 months, she said.

Labor's new network would mean 100 new jobs in all, including 80 new drivers. It would include a new depot on the northside, probably in Mitchell.

The ACT Liberals have proposed dedicated bus lanes along Northbourne Avenue at a cost of \$58 million. If they win the ACT election on 15 October, they will change the tram contract to build these bus lanes instead.

Independent Murrumbidgee electorate candidate (and ATA member) Brendan Whyte, proposes an at-least half-hourly ACTION bus service between Canberra airport and Civic, and if demand warrants, an extension or separate service between the airport and Woden, to replace the current private service which operates 12 weekday and 10 weekend services between the city and airport, costs \$12 and does not accept Myway cards. Dr Whyte also proposes increasing the number of locations selling/reloading Myway cards to include all local suburban shopping centres; removing the fare penalty for not tagging off in order to free passengers from having to keep their Myway card to hand during the journey and speed disembarkation.

New South Wales

Sydney Buses: From 5 September some services in the Northbridge and Castlecrag areas, and some routes that operate via Epping Road, Lane Cove and the Pacific Highway which previously travelled into the CBD will run to North Sydney or McMahons Point only. The changes aim to reduce congestion by reducing the number of buses travelling into the city during critical peak times. The following services will change:

- **Route 254** will no longer run to the city. It will only operate between Riverview and McMahons Point.
- Most **Route 290** services will be renumbered to **291** and only run to and from North Sydney and McMahons Point. Early morning and late night services on route 290 will continue to operate to and from the CBD.
- **Route 203** will only run to and from North Sydney/Milsons Point.
- **Route 202** will only run to and from North Sydney during weekday peak hours. At other times, services will continue to the city.
- **Route 252** will only run to and from North Sydney during weekday peak hours. At other times, services will continue to the city. There will also be extra trips between North Sydney and Lane Cove West during the morning and afternoon shoulder peak periods.

Passengers on **routes 252, 254** or new **291** can transfer between buses at Lane Cove Interchange, St Leonards or North Sydney to continue into the city when direct services are not provided, or to trains at St Leonards or North Sydney. Passengers on **routes 202** or **203** can transfer between buses at Cammeray or North Sydney for the city or to trains at North Sydney. There will also be an improved spacing of services for customers travelling towards Lane Cove West along Burns Bay Road.

There will also be minor timetable changes for **251, 252, 253, 261, 265, 269, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 292, 293, 294** and **297**.

Due to Council roadworks in Macpherson St, Warriewood, routes 185, L85 and E85 will be temporarily diverted via Pittwater and Warriewood Roads for approximately 12 months. A shuttle bus, Route 181 will operate to and from Narrabeen via Warriewood Square, Macpherson and Garden Streets.

In early September, **Sydney Buses, Hunter Valley Buses** and **Interline** uploaded new timetables. They were identical to the prior editions except for Opal information and retained their original dates.

Transdev also re-uploaded all their regions 10 and 13 timetables to their website still carrying the previous date, but they all carry a note somewhere "Dated 1 August 2016". This is possibly related to their new Kingsgrove depot which opened in the week beginning 12 September, to cover different wheelchair services etc as the result of roster changes. The new depot covers local Hurstville routes 452, 453, 455 and 947 as well as some Metrobus route M91 trips (instead of Menai), and some route 971 rosters which start and finish in Hurstville.

The fact that the region 1 timetables have also changed throws some doubt on whether these changes were caused by the opening of the Kingsgrove depot. Previously all trips were shown as route 577. Now some deviations which previously did not show a different route number, are now shown as route 577P. Routes 958 and 959 are also covered by the new Kingsgrove depot.

Queensland

Translink is reviewing Toowoomba bus services. Public consultation closes on 16 October. Coverage will be extended on proposed route 950 from Highfields Plaza to Crows Nest, and on proposed route 905 from USQ to Westbrook. All route 902 and 907 services will be extended to Glenvale and Wilsonton.

Translink is also reviewing bus services in Nambour.

Tasmania

Hobart: Metro intended to extend the Tranmere bus service to the new residential areas in January 2016 until it found that buses could not safely access some extremely narrow roads. Clarence Council advertised on 31 August a proposal by agents of the Infrastructure Division to construct a bus turnaround complete with a bus shelter and drivers' amenities on Oceana Drive south of the current terminus.

Victoria

Footscray closes, Sunshine West opens

A month after the historic Sandringham depot closed, another significant milestone took place in the early hours of Monday 19 September, with the gates on Transdev's Footscray depot at 45 Buckley St locked for a final time after 95 years. The depot has been replaced by a new facility on Vella Drive in Sunshine West, which commenced operation later that morning.

Footscray Depot served the local tramway system from September 1921 until its closure in February 1962, with the exception of the 82 Moonee Ponds suburban route. The depot continued to serve the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways bus service that succeeded the tram routes, later passing to the Metropolitan Transit Authority (1983), Met Bus (1993), Melbourne Bus Link (1998) and Transdev (2013).

Like Sandringham Depot, Footscray Depot was sold to the Melbourne Bus Link consortium in 1998 as part of the privatisation of Met Bus by the Liberal State Government. The depot will now be redeveloped for a supermarket and apartment complex, although it is currently available for short-term lease as a transport depot.

MMTB government bus routes across Melbourne's inner west operated from the depot, with key routes including Deer Park West/Sunshine Park – City (216/219), Sunshine – City (220), Highpoint – Yarraville (223), Highpoint – Deer Park West (215), and from 20/11/1978 the 232 West Gate Freeway City Express from Brooklyn (later Altona North). At night and on weekends buses often substituted tram services on Routes 57 and 82 as well as the outer end of the Upfield line. From 26/12/1936 to 9/12/1940 the MMTB also ran a Moonee Ponds – Footscray bus route along Smithfield Rd, which forms today's 404.

On 29/12/1993 the Sunshine – City services were through-routed to Brighton and Gardenvale with the closure of Elwood Depot, and in 1999 buses reached the greenfields suburb of Caroline Springs. Buses later ventured further north-west to Watergardens from 2007 until 2012 via Route 460, now operated by Kastoria.

Rostering by Transdev in recent years saw the depot operate shifts on the 903 Orbital SmartBus (from CDC's Altona depot) along with select trips in the Port

Melbourne and Sandringham areas. Similar route allocations continue to apply with the move to Sunshine West.

New Route 543 to Greenvale Gardens

Tullamarine Bus Lines will introduce a new service to Melbourne's outer north on Sunday 16 October. Route 543 will operate between Roxburgh Park and Greenvale Gardens, serving new estates west of Greenvale Reservoir. The route parallels parts of their existing 484 service.

Buses will depart every 30-35 minutes at peak times and at 40 minute intervals at other times, finishing around 2100, seven nights a week. A round trip takes a minimum of 46 minutes (plus layovers), so two vehicles will be required.

New Seymour Night Coach, Night Bus network patronage reports

Following the recent announcement of a six-month extension to Night Network until June, a fifth Night Coach corridor will be introduced on Saturday October 15, with a 0200 departure to Seymour, serving all V/Line stations along with coach stops in Wallan and Kilmore. The coach will then continue to the Bridges Army Barracks in Puckapunyal on request for those possessing a Defence Common Access Card (there is an existing V/Line coach service on Sunday afternoons, plus Seymour Coaches Route 3). With this additional route, all interurban V/Line stations will now be served by either Night Coach or Night Bus.

Figures obtained by the Liberal State Opposition under FOI show the Night Bus services are often running empty, despite overall weekend Night Network figures now averaging around 35,000. Figures for the morning of Saturday April 16 suggest just 13 touch-ons across the 21 routes between 0300 and 0400. Feeder routes 953 (Broadmeadows – Craigieburn), 963 (Ringwood – Lilydale) and 981/982 (Dandenong – Cranbourne) failed to register any boardings for the entire morning. Anecdotal observations suggest Sunday morning loadings on Night Network are stronger, so these reports may be slightly misleading.

Night Coach recorded passenger numbers of 8 or 9 Traralgon, and between 16 and 29 catching a service to Geelong, Bendigo or Ballarat.

Local Area Map updates for 709 extension

New local area maps for the Greater Dandenong and Kingston municipalities have appeared on the PTV website showing the recent extension of 709 to Noble Park, but are dated October 2016 for unknown reasons. Both maps still show the AM peak extension of 691 to Monash University, discontinued almost five years ago in December 2011.

Casey Network start date

Online timetables for various routes in Melbourne's south-east are shown with an end date of

12 November, suggesting the major network upgrade of services across the City of Casey will commence on Sunday 13 November. At the time of publication, details of the final network were yet to be released. Public consultation on the changes took place during March and April.

Woodend Flexiride begins

PTV introduced regional Victoria's second Flexiride service on Monday 3 October, operating in Woodend. Like the existing service in Yarrowonga, passengers make a booking to be collected at one of 30 stops around the local area to travel to Woodend Shopping Centre, and advise the driver of their stop when heading home. The 490 bus in the Gowanbrae Estate in Melbourne operates to a similar model but does not feature the Flexiride branding.

Seven trips will operate on an irregular timetable between 0910 and 1625 on weekdays, with trips operated by Dysons Kyneton. Consultation had suggested demand existed for services meeting commuter trains but these are not provided at this stage. Paper tickets apply rather than myki.

It is interesting to note the service model differs to nearby towns. In Kyneton, four fixed routes operate interpeak Wednesday to Friday only, while in Gisborne both a fixed route and demand responsive service (Gisbus) operate during peak hour only, meeting trains to/from Melbourne, with bookings available for both fixed stops and residential addresses.

Bendigo Route 60 changes

Two routing changes took effect on Christians' Route 60 (Bendigo – East Bendigo) on 3 October. Buses will now travel via Beischer St instead of Crook St while the loop at the East Bendigo terminus will revert to the path the former Route 9 took, along Victa Road past Bendigo Airport.

Western Australia

TransPerth: Changes to services 9 October 2016: The introduction of new routes 384 960 and 970, withdrawal of routes 354, 870, 885 and 888 and the renumbering of 886, 887, 889 to 360, 361, 362 were outlined in the proposals reported in the June 2016 *Table Talk*. Other changes are:

- 16 to Dianella now starts at Perth Busport rather than Elizabeth Quay Bus Station.
- 23 27 70 102 103 107 204 205 206 207 208 210 211 212 345 352 365 372 376 385 386 388 389 465 517 518 519 undergo time changes.
- 24 25 and 28 have additional trips and 28 now starts at Perth Busport rather than East Perth.
- 41 42 48 55 60 66 67 68 undergo time changes and run as fully accessible services.
- 220 to Armadale now starts at Perth Busport rather than Elizabeth Quay Bus Station.
- 340 341 342 344 346 347 363 371 560 561 562 will run as fully accessible services.
- 343 377 378 379 undergo time changes and run as fully accessible services.
- 349 morning service starts at Benara Road after West Swan Road rather than Caversham Primary School.
- 450 Warwick-Landsdale extend into Corimbia Estate, Landsdale.
- 910 and 930 now run further west along St Georges Terrace before turning left into Mill St to terminate at Elizabeth Quay Bus Station.
- 950 will have additional afternoon peak and Sunday night trips.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Jason Blackman, Ian Cooper, Hilaire Fraser, Caleb Ellis, Craig Halsall, Victor Isaacs, Peter Parker, Lourie Smit, Ryan Whyte, various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*, the *Age*, *Canberra Times*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Transit Australia* for Bus news.

FERRY NEWS

Tasmanian Infrastructure Minister, Rene Hidding, advised the Hobart City Council on 5 September that he will pursue the Council's recommendation to develop a plan to implement river based public transport. Such a plan is required to reduce the volume of private car traffic on the main trunk roads into the Hobart City CBD. The Council wants to bring ferry stakeholders together for further discussions. It

has been acknowledged that infrastructure costs are high as jetties for fast ferries would be required to be built in a number of suburbs such as, for example, Kingston in the south, Glenorchy, Elwick, Berriedale and Claremont in the north and Howrah, Bellerive and Lindisfarne in the east.

Thanks to Ian Cooper for Ferry news.

AIR NEWS

International

Virgin Australia will reinstate direct Melbourne to Los Angeles flights next year: Melbourne depart 1130 Mon, Tues, Thurs, Sat, Sun arrive LA at 0900 the same day;

LA depart 2110 Tues, Thurs, Fri, Sat, Sun arrive Melbourne at 0600 two days later.

Thanks to Fairfax Media for Air news.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Geoff Hassall writes about **Newcastle** bus information: So much for Government communication of timetable information! In the last NSW State Budget, as reported in *Table Talk*, was an announcement of an imminent extension of two of my local bus routes in Newcastle, 260/261. No details were given, nor was there any information published locally, so I asked my friendly local MP to look into it for me and the community.

Two months later, my MP has received a reply from the Parliamentary Secretary, not the Minister. The routes will be extended "during the 2016/17 financial year" (surprise, surprise) to "address changed travel needs due to new residential development in the Minmi area"- no surprise there either, as this is the only local area currently under development.

The only slightly constructive information follows, suggesting that they haven't yet decided where the extensions are going to go yet anyway, five months after announcing them! So why publicise them? To round it all off, the Parliamentary Secretary attaches "for Mr Hassall's information" the media release that I/we got the information from in the first place!

Moral: Don't get too excited about announcements in State budgets!

Craig Halsall writes about **V/Line** bus timetable information: After travelling through Lakes Entrance earlier this month on the twice-weekly Canberra service, I decided I'd take a closer look at the timetables for East Gippsland. It appears that between Dysons, V/Line and PTV there has been a breakdown in communication with recent timetable adjustments. I've discovered numerous discrepancies between the V/Line Orbost timetable and PTV timetables for Routes 10, 11 and 12, which I have listed below. Some departure times have shifted and some trips now travel via Lake Tyres Beach. As the stops also have stop timetables in both V/Line and PTV formats, there are presumably two differing sets of departure times displayed at each stop as well!

Weekdays

0400 ex Marlo (10) - time at Nowa Nowa should be 0443 not 0505, this bus travels via Lake Tyres Beach (not shown). The time at Toorloo Arm would also appear incorrect.
 0635 ex Marlo (10) – correct
 0800 ex Gelantipy (12) (Wed/Fri) - not shown on V/Line timetable
 1105 ex Orbost (originates at Batemans Bay & Narooma) – not shown on either Route 10 or V/Line Orbost timetable
 1115 ex Lake Tyres Beach (11) – now runs 15 mins later at 1130
 1325 ex Marlo (10) – correct

1445 ex Lakes Tyres Beach (11) – correct
 1650 ex Orbost (Tues/Fri) – not shown on either Route 10 or V/Line Orbost timetable
 1655 ex Lakes Tyres Beach (11) – now runs 20 minutes later at 1715
 0820 ex Bairnsdale (11) – now runs 15 minutes later at 0835
 1125 ex Bairnsdale (10) – correct
 1350 ex Bairnsdale (11) – now runs 35 minutes earlier at 1315 (unless there are two buses, at 1315 and 1350?)
 1450 ex Bairnsdale (12) (Wed/Fri) – not shown on V/Line timetable
 1540 ex Bairnsdale (11) – correct
 1730 ex Bairnsdale (10) – correct
 2225 ex Bairnsdale (10) – bus now travels via Lake Tyres Beach (not shown), times after Lakes Entrance need updating

Saturdays

0425 ex Marlo (10) – correct
 0635 ex Marlo (10) – correct
 1045 ex Orbost (originates at Narooma) - not shown on either Route 10 or V/Line timetable
 1100 ex Lake Tyres Beach (11) – correct
 1352 ex Marlo (10)– correct
 1900 ex Marlo (10) – correct
 0950 ex Bairnsdale (11) - correct
 1120 ex Bairnsdale (10) – correct
 1400 ex Bairnsdale (10) – correct
 1600 ex Bairnsdale (10) – correct
 2210 ex Bairnsdale (10) - bus now travels via Lake Tyres Beach (not shown), times after Lakes Entrance need updating.

Sundays

0550 ex Marlo (10) – correct
 1050 ex Marlo (10) – bus now departs at 1035 and travels via Lakes Tyres Beach. Times up to Lakes Entrance are earlier
 1450 ex Orbost (ex Batemans Bay) - not shown on either Route 10 or V/Line timetable
 1523 ex Lakes Entrance (11) – correct
 11:55 ex Bairnsdale (10) – correct
 14:00 ex Sale (10) – correct
 22:10 ex Bairnsdale (10) - bus now travels via Lake Tyres Beach (not shown), times after Lakes Entrance need updating. It is not clear why this trip is also shown on the 11 timetable as far as Lakes Entrance when all other Route 10 trips via Lake Tyres Beach are not.

The Sapphire Coast Link coach serves towns from Orbost to Lakes Entrance en route to Bairnsdale, but as noted above, these services are not shown on either the V/Line Orbost timetable or the Route 10 timetable on the PTV website. How many people are therefore unaware of these options? There is only a marginal time saving made by these coaches skipping

the towns between Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale and consideration should be made to serve these stops.

Similarly, the twice-weekly "Capital Link" coach from Canberra serves Orbost, Nowa Nowa and Lakes Entrance en route to Bairnsdale but skips all other smaller townships, but again there is no mention in the Route 10 or V/Line Orbost timetables.

It should be noted coaches departing Bairnsdale for both Canberra and the Sapphire Coast have pick-up only restrictions, as there are Orbost coach services around the same time. Both services only appear to stop at the Post Office in Lakes Entrance rather than all three coach stops which may cause further confusion.

The Wednesday and Friday Route 12 return service from Gelantipy and Buchan is also omitted from the Orbost/Lakes Entrance V/Line timetable, presumably a legacy of originating as a fully commercial service by Buchan Bus 'n' Freight in December 2003 before later becoming a subsidised service.

Residents of Lakes Tyres Beach may not be aware they should also consult the Route 10 and 12 timetables for all services – a 'related routes' comment in the route description describes the common section

with Routes 10 and 12 as between Lakes Entrance & Bairnsdale.

At first glance there would appear to be little value in duplicating information between the Orbost V/Line timetable and Route 10 and 11 intertown timetables, but the Orbost V/Line timetable fails to list smaller stops in Toorloo Arm and Lucknow, as well as second stops in Lake Tyres Beach and Swan Reach. There is also a stop shown at Lake Bunga Beach Road only in the eastbound direction (not clear why this is not shown westbound). It might make sense to include these stops to the Orbost V/Line timetable?

In short, a person wishing to travel from East Gippsland to Bairnsdale is currently required to consult the V/Line timetables for Orbost, Sapphire Coast and Capital Link along with the Route 10, 11 and 12 timetables in order to work out all options available to them.

Coupled with the outdated timings on the Route 10 and 11 timetables, travel around East Gippsland remains a complicated exercise. Showing the full suite of services and stops on V/Line's Orbost timetable would go some way to simplifying timetable information to both existing and perspective passengers.

ODD SPOT

Is it a bus, a tram or a moving tunnel? The company building the world's first "transit elevated bus" (tagged TEB-1) has conducted a test run along 300m of roadway in the Chinese city of Qinhuangdao. The vehicle is supported on guide rails either side of two traffic lanes and allows cars up to 2.1m high to pass underneath. The test vehicle is 22m long, 7.8m wide and, with a single passenger deck, is 4.8m high. Passenger capacity is estimated at 300 and a train of coupled units could operate. It is claimed to be much

cheaper than building a metro of similar carrying capacity. Motive power is not stated. Clearly it is a rail vehicle as it operates using a wide gauge guideway much like straddle cranes at ports and container depots. There is no mention of arrangements at road junctions nor how road vehicles over 2.1m high will be excluded from its path.

Some images of the test run on 2 August are at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-08/03/content_26324969.htm

About *Table Talk*

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The **deadline for *Table Talk*** is the second last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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