

Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Victorian Legislative Council

Free Tram Zone Inquiry

A submission by a public transport user. I hope this may be useful to the Committee.

Personal policy: It is my personal policy to use public transport as far as possible. I doubt a week passes without using my MyKi.

Advantages in increasing public transport use

Given the congested state of the roads and the contaminants produced by the vast majority of motor vehicles, I concur that it is best for the community to maximise use of public transport and reduce road travel by private vehicle, especially single occupant private vehicle. From this viewpoint, it follows that it is desirable to extend the free tram network for all users. Users would doubtless welcome such a scheme, as proposed in the terms of reference.

To provide a totally free **Victoria wide** public transport system for all would be beneficial for the same reason as above.

Technologies

Applied to public transport, new technologies doubtless offer potential benefits to users and perhaps in reduced operations costs and higher frequencies of services. However, there are human components in the design, construction, installation, maintenance and use of any such new technology. The technology itself may have been perfectly designed, perfectly built from perfectly formed components and made operational by perfectly performing trades, technicians and engineers. Then again one or more of those "perfections" may be lacking. (This hardly needs to be stated; disasters large and small testify to our fallibility.) Systems need ample redundancy for safety. Implementation of technology requires consideration of durability, reliability and long-term maintenance. All of which means higher costs for no visible result (like the foundations of a building).

I have been a passenger on a "driverless" Metro train. There was certainly no human operator up front. However, the vehicle was controlled by digital technology with a human (somewhere) monitoring success. I understood the control centre operator could over-ride the system in the interests of safety, if required. Skilled human monitoring with ultimate control capacity seems essential.

Caveat: Money is required

Funding: Where does the money come from? If the foregoing is applied wholesale, the "user-pay" concept is abandoned. The entire public transport network would have to be funded from levies on motor vehicle registrations (but what about the large number of vehicles registered in other states?), or from general State Revenue, or both. At the current time State Revenue will be under even greater strain. **In the meantime fare takings should be maximised**, with systems either cost-neutral or revenue gaining.

Fare evasion. How can collections of fares be improved? In my experience, many users of train, tram and bus believe in a free system! Often I see people simply ignore the MyKi system. This kind of behaviour is so for travellers of different ages and cultural backgrounds to different destinations.

Unless Public Transport Victoria implements a "head count" system I do not see how the size of the problem can be known and addressed. At present the security cameras might be viewed as a source of data to compare "Tap off/on" data with actual traveller numbers.

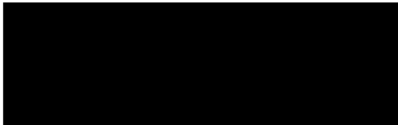
Fair Fare Go campaign: Randomised campaigns with teams spending (say) one week at station exits and on destination related trams and buses could make an impact on the "free-loaders".

"Dynamic pricing": This concept is unclear to me. If it covers lowering or raising fares according to demand that would reduce some congestion and increase traveller satisfaction with the services.

Road safety: An increase in public transport use and reduction in private car use must provide a substantial and increasing benefit to public safety.

I trust that the Committee members are able to consider the information overlap from their road toll inquiry.

Thank you.



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