

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Expanding Melbourne's Free Tram Zone

Mr Craig Rowley
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

--

I welcome the inquiry into expanding Melbourne's free tram zone and the opportunity for individuals and organisations to make written submissions. It is important to consult the community on the potential consequences of expansion of Melbourne's free tram zone.

I perceive probable consequential affects on the patronage rates for trams that travel through an expanded free tram zone, and thus increased potential for overcrowding at tram stops and on tram services.

Recommendation 1: The Victorian Government should only implement an expanded free tram zone if it first funds the measures necessary to implement increased frequency of tram services on routes travelling through the free tram zone. The funding for increased tram services in Melbourne's core should not displace the funding needed for improvement of public transport services in Melbourne's suburbs.

The total distance between Spencer St and Spring St is 1.8km and this distance can be walked within 25 minutes. The total distance between Flinders St and La Trobe is 1.1km and this can be walked within 15 minutes.

When demand exceeds the supply of tram services, tram passengers taking short trips on trams within the free tram zone are displacing those who need to travel beyond the zone boundaries.

Many passengers making such short trips could instead walk; and if they were to walk, then they would enjoy the health benefits associated with that physical activity. They could also become beneficial 'footfall', welcomed by traders on the shopping strips along the tram routes within the free tram zone.

Recommendation 2: The Victorian Government should work with Yarra Trams to improve wayfinding signage at tram stops within the free tram zone. The improved wayfinding signage should provide at each tram stop the estimated walking time to the tram stops further along the route that are within the free tram zone. This would provide people with comparative information to help them decide whether the quicker option is to walk or wait at the tram stop and then travel on the next arriving tram.

Also likely to be affected by free tram zone expansion is the amount of public transport revenue foregone, and thus

the availability of funds for re-investment in improved public transport services generally. Revenue reductions due to the free tram zone mean less funding available for service upgrades.

Recommendation 3: The Victorian Government should publish the amount of revenue foregone as a result of the free tram zone.

Almost nobody who catches public transport (i.e. train and/or tram and/or bus services) into the CBD and out again benefits from the 'free' tram services (with the exception of Earlybird passengers) because travel within the CBD is already included in the fares paid by those travelling into the CBD.

Where we need the most increase in public transport patronage is in Melbourne's suburbs. To alleviate congestion and reduce the pressure on car parking within suburban activity centres and near suburban railway stations, we need more people using public transport for trips within the suburbs. In my view, given the potential mode shift benefits, it may be better public policy to provide free suburban bus travel than to expand the free tram zone.

Recommendation 4: The Victorian Government should investigate free suburban bus travel prior to making a decision on expansion of the free tram zone.

--

File1:

File2:

File3: