

CORRECTED VERSION

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRAIN SERVICES

Inquiry into the factors leading to and causes of failures in the provision of metropolitan and V/Line train services

Melbourne — 22 September 2009

Members

Mr B. Atkinson
Mr G. Barber
Mr D. Drum
Ms J. Huppert

Mr S. Leane
Mr E. O'Donohue
Mr M. Viney

Chair: Mr B. Atkinson
Deputy Chair: Mr S. Leane

Staff

Executive Officer: Mr R. Willis
Research Assistant: Mr A. Walsh

Witness

Cr S. Dunn, chairwoman, Eastern Transport Coalition.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Good afternoon and welcome to the public hearing of the Legislative Council's Select Committee on Train Services. Unfortunately, the Chair, Bruce Atkinson, is ill today but the members who are in attendance are Mr Greg Barber, Mr Edward O'Donohue and Ms Jennifer Huppert. I am the Deputy Chair and my name is Shaun Leane. Mr Drum will be joining us shortly.

Today's hearing is in relation to the factors leading to and causes of failures in the provision of metropolitan and V/Line train services. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege.

All the evidence you give today is being recorded by Hansard. You will receive a transcript and you will be able to amend anything that you think is in error. Thank you for coming in, Cr Dunn, to speak on the submission from the Eastern Transport Coalition. I see you have an opening statement, so I invite you to make any opening remarks before we ask some questions of you.

Cr DUNN — Thank you for that, Mr Leane. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present at this hearing today. To put you in the picture, the Eastern Transport Coalition advocates for sustainable and integrated transport services across the east. Our key focus in that is to reduce car dependency and to secure the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Melbourne's outer east. We represent 1 million people across seven municipalities, and you will see those municipalities represented across the bottom of the handout.

In terms of the ETC, we see there are two key factors that have caused a failure in the provision of train services in the outer east. They are a failure to invest sufficient funds since 1960 in train services, and a failure to plan for new extensions and increases in capacity of rail over the same time. From our perspective, that failure is evidenced by overcrowded services on our existing lines and total reliance on inefficient buses to undertake trunk operations in underserved areas, and by those areas I mean Rowville, Doncaster and Yarra Ranges. We have an inability of the system to cope with increases in patronage and extremely high levels of car ownership in the outer east.

We feel this can be resolved by capacity increases on the Belgrave, Lilydale, Cranbourne, Pakenham and Glen Waverley lines, extension of heavy rail from Huntingdale to Rowville and a fixed heavy rail line to Doncaster.

I will briefly address these points. We see the failure in investment as one of the key attributes to a failure of our train system in the east. We would say that the train network has not kept pace with population growth. I am sure this committee is aware that the last train line was built in 1930 and that was to Glen Waverley. It was at a time when Melbourne had a population of 1 million people. We are nearly at 4 million people, and still with very little additional rail.

From our perspective, we have a failure of government to appropriately fund public transport projects, yet it spends billions of dollars on road projects that continue to exacerbate congestion and do nothing to address rising greenhouse gas emissions or an oil constrained economy. I do not know if you have had this little fact from any other of your presenters, but to make it clearer: a two-track passenger railway can carry up to 25 000 passengers an hour in each direction, which is the equivalent of 20 lanes of freeways.

The second key failure we see in relation to train services is to plan for new extension and increases in capacity of rail over the same time. We all know that rail passenger growth is continuing; however, we also note in the outer east passenger satisfaction is declining. There is a number of reasons the increase is there, and the ones I have included in this submission were sourced from Eddington's report, which talks about stronger-than-expected population growth across Melbourne, stronger-than-expected employment in central Melbourne, increased educational opportunities in central Melbourne, rising petrol prices, increasing awareness of environmental concerns, levies on central city car parking, increasing road congestion and the MOTC initiatives which have upgraded train and feeder bus services.

For the outer east there is clearly a commuter preference for express train services. They currently only operate in peak hours. Studies have shown that it is the express services that carry maximum loads with the off-peak, stopping-all-stations trains carrying significant loads. That is quite an issue, particularly on the Belgrave and Lilydale lines, which are Melbourne's longest lines so when you are stopping all stations you are stopping at a lot of stations along the way. That is a disincentive for people to even catch the train.

The other side of it in terms of capacity is the operational improvements that could be undertaken. We see things along the lines of better and more coordinated signalling and track utilisation across the network, improved maintenance of the rolling stock and infrastructure, and better travel demand management and distribution across the network as ways to address those failures.

In terms of the evidence that we see in the east, there are four key things that we think are indicators as to why the train services are failing the commuters of the outer east. Firstly, that is around overcrowded services on existing lines. The growing problems with reliability and overcrowding are having an immediate impact on people's perceptions and feelings about the quality of their travel experience. We are very reliant on inefficient buses to undertake trunk operations in underserviced areas. We have a situation now with SmartBus services in the outer east where there are so many people getting on the bus that the next bus is coming along behind that bus because of the amount of time it takes for those passengers to load the first bus. This is clearly not an efficient way to move the volume of people required from these regions of Melbourne.

Instead of investment in rail lines, bus services have been introduced across the east of Melbourne. They have been very well patronised but buses will never compete with trains in terms of their capacity to move people. We see that as a short-term solution, but it is certainly not a long-term solution in the east.

In terms of the system, we think there is an inability of the system to cope with increases in patronage. The removal of zone 3 has seen a huge take-up of public transport, because that was quite an impost on people in those outer regions. However, we have got a situation now with that rail system capacity underinvestment where travel times are longer, trains are overcrowded and not appropriately maintained and have contributed to making car-based travel relatively more prominent in the east — which leads me on to the high car ownership levels in the outer east.

We see the fact that we have increasing car ownership as another indicator that rail services are failing our communities. We know that cars account for 85 per cent of trips in Melbourne. We have one of the highest dependency rates in the world. Census data reveals that Melbourne's middle and outer suburbs have the highest proportion of households with two or more cars and, furthermore, that dependence is exacerbated in several suburbs that lack train or tram access.

When we look at the economics around that, too, we find that our communities are spending far more of their family budgets on maintaining a vehicle that they need to drive because there are not other options available for them. This problem is worst in Melbourne's outer suburbs where low-income households are highly car dependent and face much higher transport costs than those in the middle and inner-city suburbs.

I am not sure if this committee is aware of the VAMPIRE index. You probably are in relation to mapping oil vulnerability across our cities. In Melbourne these households are shown to be distributed in the outer suburban areas due to the high levels of car dependency and lack of alternative transport options. Our continued reliance on motor vehicles makes our communities vulnerable to increasing fuel prices and contributes to local and regional road congestion. We are consigned to spending long and wasted hours in traffic congestion and suffer the burden of higher costs of living due to car dependency.

A really telling point in the outer east is students at Monash University. They have few options. Many of them are forced to drive to the university. I think it is a good example of very bad transport planning and represents a long-term, systemic failure of the rail system to respond to the needs in the outer east. This university actually sees 30 000 people go through its doors a week, yet there is no rail link to get there. The university is surrounded by car parking, which I am sure is land that could be used for far better things than car parking.

To further talk about residents in the east and their level of car dependency, in 2007 we conducted a survey of 1000 eastern residents, and we found that more than two in three respondents travelled to work by car, with 68 per cent driving themselves and 3 per cent travelling as passengers. More than 70 per cent of those surveyed also said they used public transport once a month or less, so it is clearly a failure to reach those communities and provide them with alternatives to driving.

Furthermore, we conducted a rail commuter survey in May 2008. This is just a snapshot of some of the things our community has told us about the rail services in the east. We found that 71 per cent of commuters at the Doncaster park-and-ride want a rail service to Doncaster, 51 per cent of commuters at Belgrave want more services on the Belgrave and Lilydale lines, 50 per cent of commuters at Box Hill want more services on the

Belgrave and Lilydale lines, 33 per cent of commuters at Monash want a rail line to Rowville and 24 per cent want more services on the Dandenong line, and 52 per cent of commuters at Glen Waverley want more services on the Glen Waverley line. There is a clear message in that: our community has a real desire to see more services and increased capacity on all of those lines.

In terms of satisfaction with the service they get, 26 per cent of commuters at Belgrave believed that train services met their needs, 28 per cent at Box Hill thought that train services met their needs, 27 per cent of commuters at the Doncaster park-and-ride thought that bus services met their needs, 30 per cent of commuters at Glen Waverley thought that train services met their needs and 12 per cent thought that bus services met their needs. There is a really clear picture in all of that: the majority of our community is very unhappy with the public transport that is being delivered to that area, because very few of them in fact believe that the services meet their needs. I think that really reinforces to the Eastern Transport Coalition the failure of train services to meet the needs of commuters in the outer east.

I guess from here I am just going to talk briefly about the solutions we seek to those train failures. Capacity increases on the Belgrave, Lilydale, Cranbourne, Pakenham and Glen Waverley lines, an extension of heavy rail from Huntingdale to Rowville and a fixed heavy line to Doncaster would address some of these train failures in the east. A heavy rail line to Rowville would carry just under 2400 passengers per hour from Rowville and would take that number of cars off the road, which is in fact equivalent to one lane of a freeway. It would also have the added benefit of, in a contra direction, carrying passengers to Monash University and releasing car parking costs to that uni, and also providing a link to Monash's two largest campuses.

I think a heavy rail line to Rowville offers significant other benefits as well, including the capacity to avoid purchasing second, third or fourth cars per household. As we know, prices will rise and this will be an access capability that pays an increasing dividend in the future. The rail facility also provides effective access for those who choose not to drive or those who do not have access to cars at all.

The benefits that I have outlined in Rowville would be similarly duplicated for Doncaster and the Doncaster rail catchment as well. I think there is an additional benefit in Doncaster in that it would in fact help reduce the congestion that is experienced on the Eastern Freeway as well. Heavy rail to Doncaster would ensure efficient and competitive journey times to CBD-bound destinations, and it is only rail infrastructure that would be able to deliver the frequency and reliability of services required to increase public transport's modal share.

It is our view that if government is serious about addressing the failures of the train system, there needs to be investment in the long-term public transport needs of the east without delay. When we look at this as an advocacy group and we overlay that with the looming shortage of oil and the ability of projects to be delivered in an oil-constrained economy, it is imperative that these projects are given priority to meet the public transport needs of the region in the future.

We certainly welcome this inquiry into the causes of failures in the provision of metropolitan train services. However, from our perspective, improvements and extensions in rail are critical if government is to meet the public transport needs of the region over the next 25 years to redress the failures of the system, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce our dependence on cars. I think when we look at issues of climate change and people who are car dependent, government must start to focus on policies and investment that support sustainable and integrated transport solutions for our communities.

I reckon I have probably spent more than my 10 minutes worth on that, so thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — That is fine. We will ask you some questions now, if you do not mind. I just wanted to start off by clarifying the Eastern Transport Coalition's position on the introduction of the SmartBus and the orbital routes. Has that been embraced? Has that been welcome? Does the ETC see that as a positive thing?

Cr DUNN — The ETC has seen the introduction of SmartBuses as a positive move in the right direction, but we do not see it as a long-term solution. I think the issue that we are finding now is there has been a great uptake of SmartBus services, but it is so great it is actually now starting to stifle that system because we are now getting a banking up effect; that really defeats the purpose of the SmartBus because it is overpatronised.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — And on all the routes it has been introduced on out there, like Stud Road?

Cr DUNN — Wellington and Stud roads are our key ones. In terms of Doncaster and the Doncaster area rapid transit, although we welcome that, we really include the disclaimer that it must deliver train-like services to actually be effective for that region of Melbourne.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Cr Dunn, thanks for your submission. From the issues you have identified that need fixing, what would be priority no. 1?

Cr DUNN — I guess it is a matter of what is low-hanging fruit and what is probably a bit harder to achieve. I think capacity increases are probably more a low-hanging fruit that is available, whereas the construction of rail lines is a far more significant project, but that is not denying that they are a priority for the Eastern Transport Coalition. We would say across where we do have rail we really do need better capacities on those rail lines, but we have areas that are crying out for rail and really need those services.

Mr O'DONOHUE — You mentioned in your submission the feasibility study commissioned by Knox City Council into the provision of rail for Rowville, and that the cost estimate of that was \$450 million. When was that report commissioned and was the analysis of the \$450 million detailed? As I said to previous witnesses, one of my concerns is the cost estimates for projects have ballooned in recent years from \$10 million or \$20 million for some projects to over \$100 million, \$200 million or \$300 million without apparent justification. Could you just address that issue with reference to that project?

Cr DUNN — That study was actually commissioned in 2004, and I would expect that those figures are informed by those 2004 figures. I would think it is a reality, and certainly my experience as a councillor would say that there will be cost escalation in that figure now. It has not been looked at in current terms, so I cannot give you an accurate figure, but that is the 2004 figure.

Mr BARBER — Just in terms of the single-track sections that you have on a couple of lines, what impact do they have on efficiency and also reliability, and to address those, would that be, do you think, cheaper than building a railway on a greenfield site or in some ways more complicated if they were to be picked up, because we can do the low-hanging fruit and we can do the very expensive big projects? Do you think there is somewhere in the middle, and what are the benefits specifically that come from fixing those?

Cr DUNN — I see the single-track sections — and that is mainly on the Belgrave and Lilydale lines — as key issues on those lines because if you get a hold-up anywhere along that single-track section, it affects the entire timetabling of that particular section of track.

In relation to the Lilydale line, I think it is quite feasible to put a second track in there, and that is due to mainly the topography of the land and the geography. The Belgrave side of the line is probably technically far more difficult because of the geography of the land, but I think we are probably clever enough to use timetabling for Belgrave, because I suspect that there are some construction challenges on that side of the line that will just come from being an environmentally sensitive area with a lot of land slip and geographically or topographically — I am not sure if that is a real word — constrained. However, with Lilydale there is an ability to put in a second track there and that would change how that track functions quite well, and I think when we look at the punctuality and cancellations, Lilydale features very highly as a train line that has a significant number of cancellations and punctuality issues which I am sure stem from that single track.

I also think probably another issue is the third track from Box Hill as well, which would allow a greater ability for express train services as well and free up lines so you could run express and stopping-all-stations trains in parallel throughout the day.

Mr BARBER — Has the ETC done any analysis of different timetabling that would allow for that capacity even with the current system — a specific proposal to — —

Cr DUNN — We have not done any specific analysis around that. We have certainly had submissions sent to us from time to time by various people who are very keen on these issues, but we have not then sought third-party independent advice on that, but it makes interesting reading, what is sent to us, because for someone like me who is not a train timetabling expert they seem to be quite practical, useful suggestions that could be implemented fairly readily.

Ms HUPPERT — In your submission, a lot of your solutions to the problems of the trains rely on radial train lines which were first proposed many years ago. I wondered if your committee had looked at changing the nature of the use of the road and use of public transport in terms of work, social activities, school trips in that period and the changing patterns, because even employment now is spread around the eastern suburbs rather than necessarily being concentrated in the CBD, and I wondered if you had looked at the changing patterns of transport use over the last 20 or 30 years.

Cr DUNN — We certainly have not looked over the last 20 or 30 years, but what we do know is that a lot of people in the east are travelling into the inner Melbourne areas for employment opportunities, so in terms of that orbital travel, we would say that that is probably the role of Smart Buses to provide those missing links, but we are finding that an awful lot of our commuters in those outer areas are still travelling into the city.

Ms HUPPERT — Even though the employment arcs show that places like city of Greater Dandenong and city of Monash is where a lot of the employment growth is?

Cr DUNN — Yes. I know it is a strange pattern, but particularly when you look in your Rowville, your Yarra Ranges and Doncaster, there is a lot of direction into inner Melbourne.

Mr DRUM — Councillor, I am a regional member and I am not au fait with a lot of the eastern suburbs.

Cr DUNN — That's fine.

Mr DRUM — I will ask you a few broad questions. How often does your group meet?

Cr DUNN — We meet monthly.

Mr DRUM — What sort of mechanisms are in place for members of the public to gain access to your group to put new concerns or ongoing concerns, which will obviously be coming up from time to time so what opportunities are there for that to take place?

Cr DUNN — The group consists of seven municipalities. Representatives include a councillor from each of those municipalities and officers as well. So councillors really provide the conduit between community and the Eastern Transport Coalition, and councillors are encouraged to bring those concerns to the group for broader discussion, and from time to time we will invite people along to talk about various issues, particularly when they have broader application across the east of Melbourne.

Mr DRUM — In your own mind, is your group able to prioritise the various concerns of seven different municipalities, each with a representative there and each with maybe a barrow to push? Do you think your group is able to condense the information and go forward under a platform of maybe one, two or three main priorities?

Cr DUNN — Absolutely.

Mr DRUM — And that is what you have given us here today?

Cr DUNN — Yes. We have had many discussions over time as a group and come out with the significant priorities for those seven municipalities, and really we believe there is strength in doing that together, and we do not have arguments about those priorities. It is an agreed and consensus process around that.

Mr DRUM — If I could culminate this series of questions, what type of access do you have then as your group to the Department of Transport and/or government?

Cr DUNN — I am invited to a round table that Jim Betts holds on a two or three-monthly basis. I go along to that, and really our other communication is on an as-needs basis where we will invite various people from various departments to talk about a range of things that we would like to hear about. It is often that we will in fact invite people in to talk to the group about various concerns. Our most recent one was when we had someone along to talk about the myki ticketing system. That tends to be the interaction we have. We also make representations to MPs from time to time about various eastern metropolitan issues.

Mr DRUM — I am concerned about that whole process. You seem to have your own house in order, in relation to bringing the councils together for different issues from constituents through to councils, councils through to the table, and then the issues seem to be prioritised and presented. Under this current system, do you have any runs on the board in achieving set objectives?

Cr DUNN — Absolutely. We would see the removal of zone 3 as one of our key wins. That was a great victory for the Eastern Transport Coalition and all of those people who were copping those zone 3 tickets. We would also say that the success of the federal government providing funding for public transport, which is a platform the ETC has had for a long time, is another measure of our success. There is also a whole range of things around bus services and smaller ticket items as well.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — In going back to movements, especially for employment, there have been some figures showing that there is a very busy corridor north–south, probably from the north of Ringwood to the south of Dandenong, as far as employment movement goes. I suppose this question is in a couple of parts. I have seen a feasibility study for over rail and parts of it concerned me — and we are talking of three feasibilities, so I am not saying it is not feasible — parts of it as far as building it up on pillars and overhead and all that, seemed a bit hard to grasp, but that is just a comment from me. In saying that parts of the east are crying out for heavy or fixed rail, has the ETC looked at — some suggestions have come to my office from constituents, as they would to you as well — any alternative rail route that would go to Rowville, if it was not feasible to go down North Road, Wellington Road, as far as a spur off Ferntree Gully. Someone has suggested to me a spur off Ferntree Gully that would pick up a couple of spots along the way to Rowville. Is that something that has been discussed?

Cr DUNN — We have not investigated other routes; I guess because we looked at that pre-feasibility study as the model for our advocacy efforts. But I think that ETC is at the point now where we are an advocacy group. We understand and recognise that there is a need for that catchment — we are talking about 100 000 people — who would be able to utilise that particular rail, should it be built. Now that we have put the matter back to government saying there is a crying need here, it is up to experts to work out how it gets to Rowville. It is very easy to be shot down in flames if you say, ‘Go this way’ and they will say, ‘No, we cannot go that way.’

Mr O'DONOHUE — I am interested in your comments about the inadequacy of railway station car parking. That is a particular issue now in the outer east and parts of our mutual constituency. Have any of the member councils or the ETC done any work on actual analysis of that issue? My anecdotal sense is that is a real problem, but I do not have hard data.

Cr DUNN — We have not actually collated hard data but when we have spoken, comparing our municipal experiences, it continues to be an issue in most areas and particularly along the Belgrave and Lilydale lines it is a huge issue in terms of where there is spill out into parking that is for traders. There are a lot of tensions now between commuters and changes because commuters are taking up car parking spaces all day. We are seeing spill out into local streets as well, where it is really not appropriate to be parking cars all day.

Ultimately what the ETC would like to see is a better integrated bus service to get people to train stations rather than building more car parking spaces, which is probably not a good long-term solution. It is about having a better integrated solution to get buses to stations, but it is the tail end of the day when that becomes an issue for commuters. We have situations where you might arrive at Upper Ferntree Gully and you have just spent an hour getting there on your express service, only to be running late and miss the bus that left 5 minutes ago and you have to wait another hour. This means that people are not going to use buses to get to stations because of that lack of integration around that, so they are forced to use car parks and this continues to be quite a tension, particularly in the outer areas.

Mr O'DONOHUE — You say that there has been a failure to invest sufficient funds since 1960. How did you come about that date of 1960?

Cr DUNN — I would think that that is probably the last time that there were sufficient funds in that. I cannot provide you with any data on that. I am happy to follow up for you, but I have not got that particular data in front of me. Certainly we have seen some investment happen of recent time, but we would attest that has not actually been for the eastern regions of Melbourne, so although that is good to see, it is not so good for us.

Mr BARBER — With the proposal for the upgraded Doncaster freeway bus system or whatever they are calling that now, have you had input to that since it was finalised through the VTP process? I have not heard any announcements of how it is progressing, or what is being designed there. Is that something ETC has had a chance to talk to the department about?

Cr DUNN — No, we have not had any discussions in terms of the implementation of DART, as it is called. It may have happened at a municipality level, so Manningham may have, but I would think that would be something they would readily report back to the ETC because we do chat about the comings and goings of public transport at our monthly meetings and I have not heard a thing on that.

Mr DRUM — Previous witnesses were also keen to talk about the growth which has occurred over the last four or five years. I see you have a list of about 9 or 10 dot points as to why there has been an increase. A previous witness highlighted three of those dot points to be higher petrol prices, increased road congestion and increased environmental awareness. Would you agree with the previous witness and maybe elevate those three dot points above the others as the main drivers for this pretty substantial uptake in patronage, or would you differ?

Cr DUNN — I think probably of all of them road congestion would be one of the key issues around getting in your car.

Mr DRUM — People are making that decision: 'Roads are congested, I will get on public transport'.

Cr DUNN — I think that is a key one. I think in terms of rising petrol prices, although anecdotally all of us would think that that would be a factor and Eddington identifies it as a factor, I have been speaking to the bus association and it has found that it has not been as much of a determining factor as we may have thought, for it particularly. That makes me question how far up in the hierarchy petrol prices are. I guess we have to be mindful of the fact there has been a little bit of a reprieve in relation to oil prices. At that time we were looking at petrol prices at \$1.70 a litre, whereas we are only looking at around \$1.20 a litre at the moment.

I suspect as we become more and more oil constrained and the price of petrol goes up that will be a far bigger indicator in terms of people simply not being able to afford to drive their cars as much; they will be forced into other ways of getting around. I would say congestion would be a key one, and certainly when we look at the economics of that too we see the impact on productivity in Victoria is immense.

Mr DRUM — In relation to young people coming in to enjoy the nightlife in the Melbourne CBD and then getting home, are you aware there have been significant issues for the eastern suburbs, which represents a million people — I would suggest there is probably a large percentage of young revellers among them —

Cr DUNN — There is certainly is.

Mr DRUM — Are you hearing this regularly in the east — that it is hard for our young people to get home late at night?

Cr DUNN — It is challenging, although in various areas we have just had some upgrades to the NightRider bus service, which are filling gaps that did exist. More of what we hear from our young people is about their having difficulty getting to TAFE or other educational institutions. It is not so much about the social elements perhaps; it is more about their education, and university and TAFE are big issues. Because that NightRider bus has just been introduced it has actually filled a bit of a gap.

Mr DRUM — How does the NightRider bus work? Does it come out of the CBD and go to the east?

Cr DUNN — Yes, it stops at various stops along the way at an hour of the night when I am usually not up. The NightRider bus actually goes well beyond train timetables as well in terms of servicing.

Ms HUPPERT — In relation to the Doncaster issue, we have difficulty in trying to resolve what you are saying is a long-term problem with infrastructure investment. Obviously there are choices to be made about putting in a whole, new rail line. Have you had any consideration of the costings and how it would fit in with other elements of what is required of a train network and the cost benefit, basically, of a whole new train line as opposed to other types of improvements in services, such as the upgrading of the bus transport network?

Mr BARBER — Your government has done it twice.

Ms HUPPERT — I am asking because they are — —

Mr BARBER — You should have a read of them.

Ms HUPPERT — I am asking Cr Dunn because she is putting this forward, advocating for a particular solution. I am asking what Cr Dunn is basing that on.

Cr DUNN — The Eastern Transport Coalition has not done a study in relation to the Doncaster rail, but what we do know is buses will simply not move the number of people required. Our reasoning is that if we are going to get DART, it must deliver a heavy rail service. That is yet to be seen; we hope it does. I would suspect you would need a bus leaving every 2 minutes for that to actually happen, given the carrying capacity of a bus versus rail. I will probably follow up with great interest those two reports and have a read and see where they fit in the scheme of things.

Ms HUPPERT — In other words, it is open on the DART; you are waiting to see whether or not — —

Cr DUNN — I think that we would be fairly confident that it makes sense. When you look at the economic benefits that would be afforded to that community, not only in having the option of rail but also in taking that congestion off local roads and the Eastern Freeway, I do not think there would be any issues in relation to its stacking up as a worthwhile project.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Just a comment which is supplementary, Cr Dunn, as far as the uptake of public transport, something you mentioned that the ETC did lobby for is zone 3 being abolished, which I suppose in the ETC's mind would have encouraged people more to take up — —

Cr DUNN — Yes.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Just further to the issue of changing travel patterns in accessing educational services in particular, one of the things I think we are seeing is more people from the Shire of Yarra Ranges and the northern part of Cardinia — which I know is not part of the ETC but it is that sort of belt — accessing educational services in the Berwick–Pakenham growth corridor. Does the ETC or the Shire of Yarra Ranges have any view on the introduction of additional services to link those communities to that rail corridor and also those growing educational opportunities that exist in Pakenham and Berwick and elsewhere?

Cr DUNN — Certainly one of our key issues is around making sure that young people are linked with educational facilities wherever they are. We do find there is a lot of orbital travel, and what we also find is there are a lot of young people getting in cars and being forced to drive to these locations. That is a key issue for the ETC and — putting on my other hat — Yarra Ranges as well.

Mr BARBER — Has Yarra Ranges had one of those localised bus reviews by the Department of Transport that have been going on across the city?

Cr DUNN — Yes. Our bus review was actually linked in with Knox and Maroondah. We are yet to actually see the final outcomes and recommendations that will come out of that review. Basically, we have had the report back to the community which certainly had some good ideas but which also raised some concerns around the deletion of services as well. But we have yet to see what the final upshot was in terms of the consultants reporting back to the minister on that.

Mr O'DONOHUE — If I could just interject, that was some time ago, was it not? It was a year ago?

Cr DUNN — From memory the reporting back workshop to community members was probably around about April. I think we are expecting it at any tick of the clock, although I know from other ETC members that the City of Monash undertook their bus review over one year ago and they still do not have final recommendations on that, so they have no idea what is proposed in relation to that.

Ms HUPPERT — Just on the bus review, how did you find the process — the involvement of the community and your organisation and other like-minded community groups interested in that transport issue?

Cr DUNN — I will probably speak from a Shire of Yarra Ranges perspective in relation to this, because I attended all of the bus review hearings. They were in four quite different locations across the shire. Certainly there were good levels of involvement in what is known as the Upper Yarra corridor and also in the Dandenong Ranges. That probably reflects the fact that they have very limited transport options, so they are very keen to see improvements to those services. What was alarming to me was that at the time of reporting back to the community there was no mention of the deletion of services, which I thought was not appropriate. You need to be open and transparent about all things whether it be good news or bad news. It was only the fact that we had members of the public there who know our bus service systems very well and who said, ‘What about route blah, blah?’ that it was highlighted that in fact that service would be recommended to be deleted.

I guess another one of the things I find perplexing is that another recommendation was in fact to run a bus not through a township but rather around a township, which I think defeats the purpose of what buses are about. I think they are actually about getting people to townships. There were a few concerns around that process. I think ultimately the proof will be in the pudding of what the report says, and until we know what the final report says we are not going to have an idea of how well that process stacked up against what is recommended. We will not be able to reconcile it until then, so the jury is out.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Thanks for your time.

Cr DUNN — Thank you very much for your time.

Witness withdrew.