

1914.

VICTORIA.

REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS

ON THE PROPOSED

EXTENSION OF THE SOUTH MELBOURNE ELECTRIC TRAMWAY TO ST. KILDA WEST;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

RETURN to an Order of the *House*,

Dated 7th July, 1914, for—

A COPY of the Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways on the proposed Extension of the South Melbourne Electric Tramway to St. Kilda West; together with Minutes of Evidence.

(*Sir Alexander Peacock.*)

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 7th July, 1914.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

(Tenth Committee.)

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The Hon. A. Hicks, M.L.C.,

The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C.
(Vice-Chairman),
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R E P O R T.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS having, in accordance with the statement made by the Honorable the Premier in the Legislative Assembly on the 13th February, 1914, been requested by him to inquire into the question of the proposed extension of the South Melbourne electric tramway into St. Kilda West, has the honour to report as follows :—

1. During last Session of Parliament (1913-14) an Act (No. 2497) was passed, on the recommendation of this Committee, authorizing the South Melbourne City Council to construct a double-track electric tramway, having a gauge of 4ft. 8½in., from the south side of Prince's-bridge, through South Melbourne, Albert Park, and Middle Park, terminating in Patterson-street, close to Fraser-street, which is the boundary between South Melbourne and St. Kilda. The Council of the latter municipality, by four votes to three out of the nine members constituting that body, resolved to confer with the South Melbourne Council concerning an extension of the tramway along Fraser-street, Beaconsfield-parade, and Acland-street, St. Kilda, terminating at Carlisle-street, where it would link up with the existing Balaclava, Caulfield, Malvern, Hawthorn, and Kew electric tramways. As the South Melbourne Council favoured such an extension, a deputation from it and the St. Kilda Council waited on the Honorable the Premier on the 19th November, 1913, and requested him to have a Bill sanctioning the extension brought before Parliament. Mr. Watt replied that he would ask the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways to inquire into the proposal after he had intimated to the Legislative Assembly his intention to do so.

2. Following the lines of the inquiries made by the Committee some months ago concerning other electric tramway proposals in the suburbs of Melbourne, it considered this project from the following aspects :—

- (a) The advisability of constructing the whole or any portion of the tramway mentioned from the stand-point of local requirements by providing transit facilities for the residents of St. Kilda West and also for the visitors to the beach frontage, St. Kilda, with its varied attractions.
- (b) Whether the route advocated by the St. Kilda Council was the best for the traffic requirements.
- (c) Whether the tramway would harmonize with the future development of the metropolitan tramway system.
- (d) The relation of the tramway to the suburban railway system.
- (e) The willingness of the local municipal council to undertake the financial responsibility connected with this tramway extension.

ROUTE OF PROPOSED TRAMWAY.

3. Although it was agreed at the conference between the St. Kilda and South Melbourne Councils that the route of the projected extension of the electric tramway should be along Fraser-street, Beaconsfield-parade, and Acland-street, the former body subsequently favoured an alteration in the route by constructing the line along Park-street (which is a continuation of Patterson-street), Mary-street, and Beaconsfield-parade, and thence along Acland-street to Carlisle-street. The South Melbourne Council offered no objection to this change in the route, as it was in accordance with its own view that the tramway should be kept off Beaconsfield-parade as far as possible, so as not to interfere with the motor and other vehicular traffic along that busy road, which skirts the foreshore of Hobson's Bay. Mary-street being substituted for Fraser-street would lessen the length of the tramway in Beaconsfield-parade, and so reduce the risk of accidents. This alteration in the route would, it was said, be more likely to increase than decrease the local tramway traffic, and would not inconvenience visitors to the beach at St. Kilda. Mary-street route would involve 2¼ chains extra construction as compared with the Fraser-street proposal.

LENGTH AND COST OF TRAMWAY.

4. The length of the double-track electric tramway from the terminus of the South Melbourne undertaking at Fraser-street along Park and Mary streets, Beaconsfield-parade, and Acland-street to Carlisle-street, St. Kilda, would be $87\frac{1}{4}$ chains, and its cost was estimated at £16,408, including the overhead construction; alterations to sewers, gas and water pipes; cross-overs; engineering fees; allowance for unforeseen contingencies; and interest on capital during construction. To that had to be added £3,300, being the cost of three cars, making the total estimated capital expenditure £19,708. Having regard to the outlay incurred on the Prahran and Malvern electric tram tracks and cars and to the cost of constructing similar undertakings in Adelaide, the estimate stated may be considered a reasonable one at current rates of wages and prices of materials.

TRAM SERVICE AND FARES.

5. It was proposed to have a five-minutes service on this tramway extension during the busy hours, and one of from seven and a half to ten minutes at other portions of the day, so as to fit in with the contemplated service on the South Melbourne section, it being intended to run the cars through from St. Kilda to Prince's-bridge. A fare of 1d. would, it was said, be charged between Carlisle and Fraser streets, St. Kilda. The through fare, however, would be 3d. from Carlisle-street, and also from Fraser-street—the South Melbourne boundary—to Prince's-bridge, it being impracticable to charge 4d. from Carlisle-street into the city, in view of the fare from St. Kilda Esplanade by the competing cable tramways and motor omnibuses being but 3d.

POPULATION SERVED.

6. Representatives of the St. Kilda Council stated that, taking an area a quarter of a mile on either side of the proposed tramway, a residential population of 5,640 in St. Kilda West would be served by the extension. In addition, the tramway would give facilities to the residents of Albert Park and South Melbourne to reach the St. Kilda Esplanade by a direct and cheap route. It would also provide another means for people living in Melbourne and in the northern and eastern suburbs, especially when the Swan-street and Riversdale-road electric tramway is in operation, to reach the beach, pier, baths, and places of amusement along the St. Kilda foreshore. During the summer evenings and on holidays the railway, cable tramway, and motor omnibus traffic to St. Kilda was congested, and this proposal would, if given effect to, help to relieve it and convenience the public. Moreover, it was necessary, they added, to extend the South Melbourne electric tramway through St. Kilda West to the intersection of Acland and Carlisle streets so that it might there junction with the existing Balaclava, Caulfield, Malvern, Hawthorn, and Kew electric tramways, and thereby enable persons to make a round trip of 13 or 14 miles through those suburbs, returning to Prince's-bridge by the Riversdale-road and Swan-street electric tramway, or to the city by the Kew tramway and the Victoria-street cable cars. This round trip would, it was believed, become a popular one, and add largely to the traffic over the proposed tramway. The extension was therefore an important connecting link in the tramway system of the southern and eastern suburbs.

7. As the residents of Acland-street, St. Kilda, are already well provided with transit facilities, having the cable tramway and motor omnibus services within easy reach, and as they did not ask for this tramway extension, nor is it likely to cause any local development or lead to an increase in the residential population, the Committee questioned the St. Kilda councillors who gave evidence before it regarding the need of carrying the tramway across Fitzroy-street and along Acland-street to Carlisle-street. They said that if the extension terminated in Beaconsfield-parade, on the north side of Fitzroy-street, those desiring to make the round trip through Balaclava, Malvern, and Hawthorn or Kew would have to walk close on half-a-mile either by way of Acland-street or St. Kilda Esplanade to Carlisle-street to reach the Malvern tramcars. An alternative would be when the cable tramways pass in 1916 into the hands of the metropolitan municipalities to give those making the round trip a transfer over the cable tramway around the Esplanade. But that would cause those passengers to enter the cable cars at the north end of the Esplanade, where usually a number of passengers left the cars. The existing traffic at that point—where the Esplanade, Fitzroy-street, and Beaconsfield-parade meet—was now congested at times, especially on summer evenings,

and it would be dangerous to add to it by requiring the round-trip passengers to enter or leave the cable cars at that spot. It would also be dangerous to the numerous children frequenting the beach in the summer months to run swift electric trams along the Lower Esplanade. In their opinion there was no other course than to carry the extension along Acland-street to Carlisle-street, St. Kilda.

CONSTRUCTION OF A SECTION OF THE EXTENSION.

8. An inspection of the locality showed that if the South Melbourne electric tramway were extended about 50 chains from Fraser-street to near the Esplanade, St. Kilda, it would gain increased traffic and be a greater public convenience. The Committee asked the South Melbourne Council—"If the extension terminated in Beaconsfield-parade, adjacent to Fitzroy-street, and the St. Kilda Council offered no objection to the construction of that extension, but would not share in the cost of the work and of operating the line, would the South Melbourne Council be willing to make the extension and operate it on its own responsibility?" The answer was "No."

USING THE CABLE TRAM TRACKS.

9. Some months ago it was suggested by a representative of the Fitzroy Council in connexion with a proposed tramway extension in the northern suburbs that the electric tramway cars should be run over the cable lines. On the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company being consulted by the Committee regarding this suggestion, it replied that the proposal was not practicable, as the "flanges of the wheels generally used for electric cars would be too large for the cable rails." Moreover, the Committee understands that even if the electric cars such as are in use on the Prahran and Malvern system could be run on the cable rails there would not, owing to the sides of the electric cars overhanging the rails several inches more than the cable cars, be room for the electric cars to pass each other when proceeding along the curved cable track at St. Kilda Esplanade. Therefore, it would be impossible to use the existing cable tracks at St. Kilda Esplanade to run the South Melbourne electric cars from Beaconsfield-parade to Carlisle-street.

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO CONSTRUCTION.

10. If authority is given to construct this tramway extension, both the St. Kilda and South Melbourne Councils expressed their willingness to accept similar conditions to those contained in the *South Melbourne Tramways Act 1914* regarding the hours and rates of pay of the tramway employés; the right of Parliament, at any time, to revise the fares charged on this extension without compensating either council; and empowering any general authority (which may be constituted to control the tramway system of Melbourne and suburbs) to take possession of this tramway on taking over any outstanding liabilities connected with that undertaking at the time of transfer. The St. Kilda Council further stated, in answer to a question put by the Committee, that it had no objection to a clause being inserted in the Bill authorizing the construction of this tramway extension that twenty ratepayers may demand a poll, under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1903*, to determine whether the undertaking should be proceeded with or not.

FINANCIAL ASPECT.

11. Careful consideration was given by the Committee to the financial aspect of the proposed tramway extension. It ascertained that Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co., consulting electrical engineers, Melbourne, had furnished the Councils concerned with estimates of revenue and annual charges. These showed that the South Melbourne electric tramway when considered by itself, that is, from Prince's-bridge to Fraser-street, would yield a net profit of £1,247 during the first year of operation. This was on the assumption that the annual revenue obtained from the 23,500 persons residing within a quarter of a mile on either side of the proposed route through the municipality of South Melbourne would average 14s. per head of that population. They expressed the belief that if the St. Kilda extension were constructed it would bring extra traffic to the South Melbourne electric tramway, and so add £1,175 a year to the revenue of that undertaking, without increasing the working or maintenance expenses of the South Melbourne section. At any rate, in the figures placed before the Committee no addition was made to the running costs of the South Melbourne section in respect of this extra traffic, it being apparently assumed that the tram service provided on the South

Melbourne undertaking to meet its local traffic would also be sufficient to cope with the extra passenger traffic arising from the construction of the St. Kilda extension. They also took the population on each side of the proposed St. Kilda extension to Carlisle-street, and a quarter of a mile beyond that terminus, at 5,280, which was the figure supplied by the St. Kilda municipal authorities, and assumed that the revenue of the extension would equal 15s. per annum per head of the population served in that tramway area. This gave an estimated revenue of £3,960 during the first year of operation. On this basis Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co. submitted the following balance-sheet for the St. Kilda extension:—

Revenue per annum	£3,960
Working Expenses per annum, including maintenance, power cost, and management, at 9d. per mile on 102,000 car miles	£3,825
Interest on £19,708, at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.	887
Renewal Reserve Fund, 2 per cent. on £17,951 (cost of permanent way, cross-overs, &c., overhead construction, and cars).	359
		5,071
Difference	£1,111

12. "This apparent loss on this section," they added, "does not take into account the gain on the South Melbourne line due to this extension, which we have given as £1,175—this would leave a net profit of £64—nor does it take into account other revenue from the inter-connexion with the Prahran and Malvern line that would undoubtedly result." No estimate of the revenue arising from that inter-connexion was made. They further pointed out that if the anticipated profit of £1,247 per annum on the South Melbourne section, when considered by itself, were added to the £64, the complete system, including the St. Kilda extension, would give a total net profit of £1,311 during the first year of operation.

REDUCTION IN ESTIMATED ANNUAL LOSS.

13. The report of Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co. was dated 13th August, 1913. The population residing in St. Kilda West which would be served by the extension was then put down at 5,280 by the local municipal authorities. The latter now estimate the population at 5,640, or an increase of 360, which, at 15s. per head, would add £270 to the anticipated revenue of the extension and reduce the estimated annual loss from £1,111 to £841. The St. Kilda Council informed the Committee that the basis on which any profits or losses arising from the construction of the proposed extension were to be distributed or borne had not yet been discussed by that body nor by the South Melbourne Council, but the St. Kilda Council approved of the undertaking, and was prepared to accept the financial responsibility attaching to it. The general rate levied by the St. Kilda Council in 1913 was 2s. in the £1 on the annual value of the rateable property in that city. A total revenue of £30,000 was obtained last municipal year from that source.

VIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE.

14. No arrangement having been made with the South Melbourne Council that the profit on its line was to be used to meet the loss on the St. Kilda extension, the Committee had to regard the proposal to extend the tramway from Fraser-street to Carlisle-street, St. Kilda, as a separate undertaking. As already stated, Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co. estimated that the traffic on the St. Kilda extension would add £1,175 to the annual revenue of the South Melbourne section by bringing additional traffic to it. But no increase was made in the working expenses of the South Melbourne section in consequence of this extra traffic. That assumed that the cars run on the South Melbourne lines would be able to accommodate 400,000 or so additional passengers in the year without increasing the number of cars run on those lines. The Committee is of opinion, however, that in practice it will be found necessary to add to the car mileage and thus swell the working expenses, and so reduce the anticipated profit on the South Melbourne section. Another matter affecting the estimated profit on that section is that the working expenses, including maintenance, cost of power, and management is put down at 9d. per car mile. This was a reasonable estimate when

Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co. compiled their figures in August, 1913. But since then the Prahran and Malvern Trust has issued its balance-sheet for the year ended 30th September, 1913, and it shows the working costs referred to above totalled 9·563d. per car mile. In view of these figures and the recent award of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration concerning the wages, hours, &c., of tramway employés, the Committee considers that 9½d. at least should now be regarded as the cost per car mile. Therefore, it may be found when the South Melbourne tramway is in operation and has to provide car accommodation for the St. Kilda traffic and pay the requisite wages to its employés that there is not much profit available to go towards meeting the expected loss on the St. Kilda extension, even if the South Melbourne Council is prepared to hand over its tramway surplus for that purpose.

15. Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co. estimated a revenue of 15s. per annum per head of the population in St. Kilda West served by the proposed tramway extension, and also a similar return per head of the population in South Melbourne served by the new tramway if the St. Kilda extension were added to that undertaking. If that addition were not made to the South Melbourne lines, the local revenue would remain at 14s. per head of the population. As the South Melbourne tramway from Prince's-bridge to Fraser-street will be over 3 miles in length, and will be divided into sections with fares ranging from 1d. for each section to 3d. for the full journey, an estimated annual revenue of 15s. per head of the population is not an unreasonable one, as the average fare per passenger is likely to be at least 1½d. per journey. But where, as in the case of the proposed St. Kilda extension, the section is a mile in length only, and owing to the competition of the cable tramway and motor omnibuses it will be impracticable to charge more than 1d. per passenger journey on that extension—and something less in the case of a through journey to the city, as South Melbourne will want its fare from Fraser-street to Prince's-bridge—an annual revenue of 15s. per head of the population seems to the Committee to be too high an estimate, even after making allowance for the receipts obtained from the inter-connexion with the Prahran and Malvern Trust's system at Carlisle-street, St. Kilda. It considers that a revenue of 12s. 6d. per head of the population served would be an ample estimate. In support of this reduced estimate, it may be stated that the journeys per head of the population served by the tramways operated by the Prahran and Malvern Trust last year numbered 136, which, at 1d. per journey, would yield a revenue of 11s. 4d. for the year. This included the twelve months' traffic to Chapel-street, Prahran, with its constant trade attractions, which may be set off against the St. Kilda Esplanade traffic, which is active during the summer months only. It also included the Balaclava-road traffic to St. Kilda foreshore for five months from May to September, 1913. If, therefore, 12s. 6d. per head of the population served is considered a reasonable estimate, the revenue of the St. Kilda extension during the first year of operation will be about £700 per annum less than was stated by Messrs. McCarty, Underwood, and Co. This, coupled with the extra ½d. per car mile to be added to the estimate of working expenses, &c., bringing the charge up to 9½d. per car mile, will materially increase the anticipated loss on the St. Kilda extension if it is to be regarded as a separate undertaking. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the Tramway Fares Revision Commission recommended that the through fare on the cable tramways to St. Kilda and Prahran should be 2d., the same as is charged on all the tramways operating in the northern suburbs. No doubt this reduction will be made in 1916, when the cable tramways pass into the hands of the metropolitan municipalities, or the body representing them, and will further affect the receipts of this suggested extension.

LOSS TO ST. KILDA RAILWAY.

16. The Railways Commissioners informed the Committee that they were not averse to the building of tramways in the metropolitan area, so long as they improve transportation facilities in a legitimate way, and are not likely to enter into unnecessary competition with the railway system, which had been instituted at the expense of the whole of the people of the State. They pointed out the recently-authorized electric tramway from Prince's-bridge through South Melbourne and Albert Park to Middle Park was expected, as stated at the time that proposal was inquired into, to reduce the receipts of the St. Kilda railway line by £5,000 during the first year of operation of the tramway. The suggested extension from Fraser-street to Carlisle-street, St. Kilda West, would involve a further loss of approximately £5,100 per annum, or a total

loss of £10,100 in the first year of the tramway operating. As they regarded the proposed tramway extension as a serious competitor of the St. Kilda railway, they opposed its construction. Such an extension appeared to them to be inconsistent with a sound metropolitan scheme of tramways, which should not seek to provide additional lines in competition with the railways, but rather include lines which would act as feeders to existing railway lines.

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE.

17. As has been already stated, Acland-street and its vicinity, St. Kilda West, are amply provided with transit facilities, the adjacent cable car and motor omnibus services fully meeting the requirements of the residents. It seemed to the Committee that the suggested extension along Acland-street had been brought forward more as a means of linking up the South Melbourne and Balaclava-Malvern electric tramways than serving any local residential requirement. The revenue, however, that would be derived from the through traffic as the outcome of that inter-connexion would not, in the opinion of the Committee, for some years pay the expense of running the South Melbourne electric tramways the half-mile along Acland-street, between Fitzroy and Carlisle streets. If the cable tram service is converted to an electric one, the South Melbourne electric cars could then be run by way of the St. Kilda Esplanade to Carlisle-street, and there pass on to the Balaclava-Malvern electric lines. In that case the Acland-street line would be unnecessary and a needless expense, as it is not required to meet any local purpose. Consequently, the Committee considers the Acland-street route is not the best for the traffic requirements, nor would it harmonize with the future development of the metropolitan tramway system. Taking the pier as the centre of attraction at the St. Kilda foreshore, an extension of the South Melbourne electric tramway to the junction of Beaconsfield-parade and Fitzroy-street, St. Kilda, would suit the seaside traffic equally as well as the proposed extension along Acland-street, it being little or no further to walk from the end of Fitzroy-street to the pier than from any part of Acland-street. Fitzroy-street seems the natural termination of the South Melbourne electric tramway, but as such an extension would traverse St. Kilda territory for but a short distance—insufficient to justify the St. Kilda Council assuming any financial responsibility—and as the South Melbourne Council declined to undertake that extension on its own account, even if the St. Kilda Council offered no objection, the Committee has to report that it is inexpedient to extend the South Melbourne electric tramway.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 2nd July, 1914.

[*Minutes of Evidence are not printed.*]