
Tramway Topics

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BOURKE STREET CONVERSION. Board Anxious to Commence Construction.

It is learned that there is an impression in some quarters that the statement in "The Age" on the 5th January that "double and single decker buses will be running in Bourke Street for many years—until 1955 at least," emanated from our Chairman (Mr. R. J. H. Risson, C.B.E., D.S.O.). We would like to emphasise for the benefit of the staff that it did not. It is known further that "The Age," to whom the Board is indebted for support throughout the years and helpful suggestions, did not intend the article to be read as if it had come from the Chairman, but only as an expression of the paper's own opinion.

Naturally the Chairman declined to commit himself to a specific date for the commencement of track construction. With the present unsatisfactory manpower position and the uncertain situation in regard to materials, it would be unwise to attempt a firm estimate at this stage.

The Board is most anxious to start track construction as early as possible. Looking to the capital expenditure already incurred, which, of course, must remain unremunerative until the lines to East Brunswick and Northcote are opened, that desire can be understood and appreciated. But nothing can be said in favour of an early start with inadequate gangs and the prompt supply of materials uncertain. To do that would be but to prolong the unavoidable inconvenience which will be suffered by the public when the work is under weigh. But the work will be started, and finished, as early as practicable.

TO MINIMISE BREAKDOWN DELAYS.

Cars to be Equipped with Two-way Radio.

Since 1931 the Board's Supervisor at the Carlton Control Room has been able through the State Electricity Commission's transmission station to

communicate with any of our tower waggons fitted with wireless receiving sets. To-day we have 11 vehicles so equipped, and while the arrangement with the S.E.C. has worked satisfactorily, the Board feels that the time has come for a marked step forward, especially as the Commission has now a modern frequency modulated system in service which gives two-way mobile radio service over the Metropolitan area.

Having considered alternative schemes, the Board has decided to equip eventually 23 vehicles with two-way radio, using at present the S.E.C. station and contributing to the operating cost on a pro rata basis. The two-way radio equipped fleet would then consist of—

Tower Waggon	10
O.H. Staff	2
R.S. Breakdown Van	1
Per. Way Breakdown Van	2
Per. Way Staff	1
Sub-Station Inspectors	1
Traffic Inspectors	3
Bus Breakdown Van	1
Spare Cars	2

While this arrangement with the S.E.C. will provide an excellent service and will, it is hoped confidently, minimise the extent of delays through breakdowns in the Distribution and Traffic Department, it will be recognised that the scheme is but the preliminary move to the ultimate objective, the establishment of our own Traffic Control Centre functioning through two-way wireless communication to a fleet of motor vehicles patrolling defined areas in charge of Inspectors.

EXPERIMENTAL EQUIPMENT.

Maintenance Cost of Resilient Wheels.

Looking to the fact that some time in the New Year we shall have a tram on the streets comprising

our altered S.W.6 body on P.C.C. trucks, it was interesting to learn from the General Manager of the Glasgow Corporation Department (Mr. E. R. L. Fitzpayne) that improvements in new or existing trams in order to provide greater comfort, speed, etc., prove costly in practice. We can well believe that, for, as we pointed out in a recent issue, the drawings alone required for the alterations to the P.C.C. trucks numbered no fewer than 127.

Getting back to Glasgow, Mr. Fitzpayne tells us that the steel treads on a set of resilient rubber sandwich wheels ran only 49,000 miles, as compared with the average of 70,000 miles for the standard tyres. As the rubber sandwiches were still quite good after that mileage of 49,000, whereas the rubber components of the wheels on the Blackpool system had to be renewed after only 13,000 miles, Mr. Fitzpayne reaches the conclusion that the softer the rubber used the greater the noise reduction and the greater the maintenance costs.

That mileage of 70,000 miles for standard tyres seemed to us low compared with our records; but to make certain on that point we asked our Rolling Stock Engineer for his figures for the year which ended on the 30th June last. Here they are—

Miles per tyre

26½"	351 pairs condemned	172,423
28"	40 " "	119,590
28" solid wheels	143 " "	183,376

The difference in Melbourne's favour is remarkable, looking to the gradients of Glenferrie and Burke roads alone. In Glasgow there are but two rises of any consequence, the short pull up Renfield Street to Sauchiehall Street and the longer gradual ascent from the Tolbooth to the Cathedral.

TRANSPORT IN AMERICA.

Impressions of London Chairman.

A recent issue of "Modern Transport," London, carried the impressions formed by Lord Latham, Chairman of the London Transport Executive, on a tour of eight representative cities of the United States and Canada. What he has to say makes it evident that the traffic problems of the great cities of the world differ only in degree, and that the difficulty of maintaining a financial balance when there are abnormal peak loads allied with unprofitable off-peak loading appears as incapable of solution in New York, Chicago and Toronto as it does in London, Melbourne or Sydney.

Apart from New York, and in a lesser degree Chicago, Lord Latham found that street surface vehicles are the principal means of public transport, and that the morning and evening peaks are worse than in London. Movement is slower, and the vehicles are very overcrowded, standing passengers

being sometimes in excess of the seating capacity, while in others up to 50 per cent. of that capacity is the permitted number. "Off-peak traffic," his Lordship remarks, pointedly, "is insufficient to support the provision that has to be made to carry, even in great discomfort, the peak loads; hundreds of vehicles are idle in the middle hours and much capital expenditure is unfruitful." (But even at their worst, we would comment, they would not be half as bad as our Fisherman's Bend route).

Efforts to increase off-peak traffic have not been very successful, for concessions offered to travellers in certain hours merely lessened the revenue without attracting the additional passengers necessary to ensure an increase in the financial result. "In the result," Lord Latham mentions, "public transport, whether provided publicly or by private undertakings, has been compelled to seek successive increases of fares, and, even then, most operators are running at a loss, or very near it," a conclusion which is confirmed by the figures quoted in another column from the American Transit Association.

"Fare increases have got near to, and in some cases have passed, the point of what the traffic cannot and will not bear," Lord Latham proceeds, "and traffics have permanently declined. The result is, perhaps, accentuated by the prevalent system of flat fares as distinct from our system based on distance. Flat fares have a restrictive effect on short journey riding. Several cities have sought to minimise this by having zone fares with a flat fare within each zone, but additional fares when passing from one zone to another means that the passenger pays quite a high total fare.

"The rectangular layout of the cities of Canada and the United States, with transport routes running north and south and east and west, does not give the radial cross-wise facilities we are accustomed to in England; to travel between or across these routes generally means a transfer from one vehicle to another, and even these facilities are limited. My general impressions are that public transport is not generally regarded as a public service, forming part of the civic planning of the social and economic pattern and communications of great urban areas. In many cases, it seemed to me, the area of operation was too small, and that there were too many undertakings operating independently with little or no effective large scale co-ordination, to say nothing of integration."

UP THEY GO AGAIN!

Increased in April, the Manchester fares were again advanced in October last, the minimum fare for the first section now being 1½d. with the maximum at 7d., as compared with 1d. and 5d. On the

"limited stop" buses, the minimum charge was raised to 3d., while cheap travel tickets were advanced from 1/- to 1/6.

The financial Utopia which was to dawn on Manchester transport following upon the completion of the conversion from trams to buses seems now further off than ever.

THE POSITION AT ADELAIDE.

Like ourselves, the Municipal Tramways Trust, Adelaide, found that while for the year revenue increased (from £1,330,689 to £1,541,994) the gain was insufficient to offset the additional expenditure incurred through higher wages and prices for materials and power, the result being a deficit of £138,403 after appropriating £103,533 for Renewals, £151,199 for Interest and £33,810 for Sinking Fund.

The Chairman (Mr. L. O. Pitcher) in his report compared 1949 with 1930, and points out that while the cost of operating has increased by 85 per cent., fares have gone up only 29 per cent., and passengers by but 15 per cent. Since February, 1948, salaries and wages alone have advanced by £189,000.

On the rolling stock side, six double deck Diesel buses were put into service, the bodies for 30 single deck Diesels are being built in Sydney, while parts for 40 additional H1 trams, which are to be assembled at Hackney, are coming to hand.

MELBOURNE'S PRACTICE ADOPTED.

Two or three years ago an American made a tremendous fuss over its "leadership" in adopting the fluid drive for their cars, ignoring the fact that a British firm had specialised in that direction for the best part of a generation. Now, British technical journals are indulging in panegyrics because the Transport Department of Manchester has included with its annual report a graph showing how each £ of revenue was expended.

To read the laudatory references to the "enterprise" displayed is to wonder what would have been written over something which had not been done before. We have published such a graph in our annual reports for the last 26 years.

GLASGOW'S OFF-PEAK FARE CONCESSION.

In the hope that sufficient traffic may be diverted from the slack periods experienced between 10 a.m. and noon and 2.30 and 4.30 p.m., the Transport Committee of the Glasgow Corporation has approved a scheme under which tokens issued in books of 10 are exchanged by conductors for 1½d. tickets valid

for any distance on the trams and trolleybuses from Monday to Friday inclusive during the hours mentioned.

PROFITS A RECORD LOW. Revelations by the Transit Fact Book.

Compiled by the Statistical Fact Department of the American Transit Association, which embraces 1,445 transport concerns, the Transit Fact Book of 1949 shows that for 1948 the profits dropped to a record "low," the return on an investment of 4,077,300,000 dollars being but 2.49 per cent. as compared with 3.39 per cent. in 1947.

There may not be a "recession" in the United States, but the figures reveal that in the year under review buses, trams, subways, elevated railways and trolleybuses carried 2,000,000,000 fewer passengers than in the peak year of 1946. In all there were 21,368,000,000 passengers and the total operating revenue was 1,488,600,000 dollars. Against that revenue there were operating expenses (including depreciation) of 1,343,651,000 dollars, and as in addition 101,210,000 dollars had to go for taxes, the amount left dwindled to 43,739,000 dollars. Wages soared by 39,000,000 to 829,000,000 dollars although the staffs decreased by 5,000. General increases in fares failed to overtake the rises in wages and in the cost of materials, and managements discovered that each lift in the flat fare decreased the number of their short-haul passengers. Flat fares of from 10 to 15 cents. are now common, with at the moment the Chicago Transit Authority trying to secure permission to impose a flat fare of 20 cents. on the elevated and subway and express buses and 15 cents. on the trams, buses and trolleybuses.

RETIRING AND DEATH GRATUITIES.

Since our last issue, the Board has approved of the under-noted retiring gratuities:—

Sub-Foreman T. E. de Luca (65), 36 years' service, £1,038; A. V. S. Smith (38), 13 years, med. unfit, £235; Dvr. J. H. Underwood (60), R.S., 25 years, med. unfit, £591; Signalmen L. L. Fogg (65), 41 years, £900; Con. R. E. Burgess (45), 15 years, £240; Asst.-Control Supervisor L. E. E. Batten (65), 25 years, £979; Track Repairer C. Johennsen (63), 34 years, med. unfit, £462; Paint Mixer R. A. Blamey (65), 32 years, £747; Sub-Foreman A. B. Crichton (65), 27 years, £967; Track Repairer G. A. Dickson (65), 29 years, £613; Nightwatchman N. G. Hamilton (57), 33 years, med. unfit, £562; Leading Pitman C. J. Kennedy (55), 30 years, med. unfit, £541; Pitman R. A. Stewart (65),

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25 years, £674; Tradesman W. E. Ash (65), 47 years, £930; Con. R. G. Boyd (60), 35 years, £491; Dvr. J. McNeill (65), 36 years, £627; Con. C. M. Pepperell (65), 24 years, £676; Dvr. E. Cutler (65), 36 years, £796; and Dvr. N. G. Olson (42), 16 years, med. unfit, £261.

Death gratuities have been paid to the next of kin in respect of the following:—

Leading Hand Car Cleaner E. Nelson (55), 30 years' service, £502; Machinist F. A. G. Barker (57), 30 years, £398; Cleaner W. E. Stevens (60), 33 years, £432; Tradesman's Assistant E. Forbes (46), 24 years, £332; Tram Transport Driver A. G. Betts (56), 36 years, £474; Bus Driver F. Cameron (51), 15 years, £266; and Dvr. F. L. Hughes (61), 33 years, £554.

FOR OUR MOTOR DRIVERS.

Do you know that you can wear out tyres twice as fast in summer as in winter?

Or that in a modern city a vehicle will pull up in half the distance on one type of road surface compared to another?

Or that a very good driver can get 10 times more life out of a tyre than a very bad driver.

Or that a vehicle takes twice the distance to stop on wet asphalt as on wet wooden blocks?—"The Leyland Journal."

IN OPORTO.

Three tram extensions have taken place in Oporto, the second city and chief seaport of Portugal, since 1946, and the fleet now consists of 191 trams and 25 trailers, serving routes of 51 miles.

Only 10 buses are used. It is planned to open up new routes with trolleybuses until the traffic justifies the construction of tramways.

THE FIRST P.C.C. TRAM AT THE HAGUE.

The first European P.C.C. tram arrived at The Hague in August, that term being used to denote the fact that while it was imported from the States, in several respects it differs from the standard car of America. It is slightly shorter, it has a width of 2.20 metres as against 2.50 metres, it has three seats and one window less, it is fitted with pantograph instead of trolley and it has been constructed for two-man operation instead of the more usual American one-man system.

Remarkably good acceleration was achieved on trial, a speed of 30 kmh. (18.2 m.p.h.) being reached in five seconds. All control is by pedals—a "dead man's" pedal, accelerator and brake. The first

application of the latter gives rheostatic braking, the second actuates a brake drum on the motors, while the third brings in the magnetic track brakes.

RUBBER IN STREET PAVING MIXTURES.

Richmond was the first municipality in the Melbourne area to try laying the streets in concrete, a departure which paid handsomely in the shape of largely decreased charges for maintenance. Who, we wonder, will be the first to follow the example of New York and incorporate rubber in asphaltic mixtures?

In order to determine how the compound will stand up under heavy traffic, six stretches have been laid in Manhattan, the proportion of rubber used in each case varying from 12 to 25 pounds per ton of paving mixture. All told, 3½ tons of natural rubber was included in the 200 tons of material laid. It is proposed to leave the test stretches in place for from 6 to 18 months before appraising their worth.

Somebody is sure to write and ask what connection there is between street paving and tramway operation, so we can anticipate the query by pointing out that the Board is bound under the Tramways Act to lay that portion of the street for which it is responsible as specified by the Council concerned.

APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS.

The following appointments and promotions are notified:—

W. R. Allen, Footscray, Depot Foreman; G. T. Gazeley, Brunswick, Depot Foreman; J. G. Miller, Preston Workshops, Laboratory Assistant; C. J. S. McClounan, Depot Foreman; D. Seaton, Relief Depot Foreman; E. F. Vale, Coburg, Probationary Staff Signalman; T. C. Tippet, Preston, Depot Foreman; Freda R. Mowbray, H.O., clerk.

MALE JUNIOR CLERKS WANTED.

Members of the staff who have sons having their last holiday before starting work have their attention directed to the fact that vacancies exist in the Revenue Department for junior male clerks, with commencing salaries as under:—

14 years of age	£2/10/0 per week
15 years of age	£2/16/6 per week
16 years of age	£3/2/6 per week

Applications, together with copies of three references, should be addressed to the Industrial and Revenue Officer, Head Office.

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