

Copy for

ACTING ENGINEER & MANAGER.

COMMERCIAL MANAGER.

18th February, 1955.

TRAMWAYS - PROVINCIAL CITY OPERATIONS:

Further to my memorandum to you dated 19th August, 1954, and to subsequent discussions in the Chairman's office on the 5th November, 1954, we now submit for consideration various proposals for minimising the annual loss on tramway operations and also answers to certain specific items raised during the discussion.

1. Fares:

It is our foremost recommendation that the Commission seek authority for an increase of 1d. on adult fares with a corresponding increase of 1/6d. in the price of scholars' monthly concession tickets. We also recommend that the existing surcharge of 1d. on adult fares on Sundays and Public Holidays be discontinued so that these would remain unchanged.

The average fare paid per passenger on the Commission's provincial tramways in 1936 was 2.251d. and an increase of fares by 1d. all round in 1949 raised this average to 3.049d. This compared with 3.880d. then obtained by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board. Our last revision in September, 1951, eliminated weekly concession fares and transfers and has raised the average fare to only 3.479d. today, whereas in the meantime the Tramway Board has increased its charges to produce an average fare of 6.002d. Given approval to the recommended increase, the Commission's average fare per passenger would be about 4.3d.

We have expressed the opinion that the present fare scale is near the economic limit of our small systems and we consider that the optimum revenue has been reached on Sundays and holidays. The loss of passengers from public transport systems to private car usage has now, we think, steadied considerably and we see no reason to anticipate a greater loss of passengers due to the proposed fare increase than we sustained in the past. On this basis, therefore, the overall increase of about 22% in the fare scale giving an indicated value of about £40,000 per annum should give a net increase of about £15,000 per annum if a passenger loss of 15% is experienced as we anticipate. We point out that recent adjustment of wage margins when applied to the tramway employees' award will undoubtedly again increase our operation expenses and the limited gain of revenue with any concomitant reduction in passengers will tend to weaken opposition to further reduction of services or extensions of one-man operation we may propose.

2. Headways:

Efforts directed to the maintenance of reasonable figures for passengers per car mile since 1948 has resulted in the reduction of miles run by the Commission's tram cars to 1½ million miles per annum. This figure was last recorded in 1928 and in that year passengers totalled 9½ million compared with 12½ million carried in the last financial year.

(Cont'd.)

The characteristics today are higher peaks of industrial and shopping traffic and lower off peaks of night, Sunday, and holiday traffic or, in other words, a reduced passenger load factor.

We suggest a review of the services in consideration of the traffic now being carried, especially as to the frequency of services after 8 p.m. and on Sundays and holidays. The actual savings cannot be precisely stated until detailed schedules and duty rosters have been compiled, but it does appear possible to reduce the operation staff at Geelong by three men, at Bendigo by eight men, and Ballarat by four men by further rationalising the service in view of the conditions today. If these economies can be effected the extent of savings would be about £12,000 to £15,000 per annum. Included in this item is a proposed segregation of the Eaglehawk and Quarry Hill services at Bendigo in order to confine the larger rolling stock to the inter-urban line and adjust headways to the capacity of the larger units, at the same time we would reduce the service on the short Quarry Hill route in view of the lower volume of traffic carried thereon.

3. One-Man Operation:

A report was forwarded to you on the 28th November, 1952, concerning our extension of one-man operated services. The position has been maintained to date but not without some restlessness, as this system is against the current policy of the Tramway Employees' Association. We obtained a somewhat grudging consent to extensions after giving assurances that any further future extension of the system would be discussed with the Association beforehand.

We have now reviewed the possibilities of extending one-man operation. This, of course, is largely tied up with existing rolling stock types and the wide fluctuations in traffic density. We conclude that only limited avenues for extension of the present system of one-man car operation exist in each provincial city and at this stage we suggest the deferment of extensions of one-man services pending observation of the results of the suggested increase of fares and revision of headways.

4. Route Abandonments:

Although the report of the Transport Regulation Board concerning Geelong urban passenger transport has now been published, reference is made to our memorandum dated 24th March, 1954, with regard to the abandonment of the Golden Square tram service at Bendigo. It is suggested that, to keep the Commission's desire to be relieved of its tramway burden alive, this subject be re-opened. It is now suggested that the North Bendigo route be bracketed with the Golden Square route abandonment.

The North route is traversed in part by four urban bus operators servicing the White Hills and Huntly districts, and these services could be readily adjusted to cover the existing tram route. The Transport Board quite early indicated to us that the through-routing of the Kangaroo Flat and the White Hills-Huntly bus services appeared to them as a better design than was possible by our abandonment of the Golden Square route alone.

Recent discussion with the Board's Regional Officer at Bendigo gave us assurance that a substitute service for the tramways on the Golden Square and North Bendigo routes could be

arranged by him at very short notice and also that it would be undesirable and unnecessary for us to institute any negotiations with the bus operators.

During the discussions in the Chairman's office on the 5th November, 1954, several points were raised for investigation, and they are now commented upon as follows:-

(a) Branch Lines at Geelong

This concerned the closure of the short extensions to the Eastern Beach and the railway station. The services on these tracks were reduced by more than 60% in November, 1953, when the West and Newtown routes were linked with the East Geelong lines. There would be little tangible saving today by terminating the Chilwell service at the city centre in that the time taken on the extension would be absorbed by increasing standing time or the frequency of the service on the Chilwell route which is considered to be without justification. The revenue from the above extensions is approximately £1,000 per annum.

(b) Pay Load for One-Man/Two-Man Trams

Based upon the individual Branch expenditures and the average fares paid per passenger for the year ending 30th June, 1954, the following would be the order of the pay loads required per average trip run in each city.

Geelong - one-man tram - 67 passengers.

 two-man " - 88

Bendigo - one-man " - 62

 two-man " - 75

Ballarat - one-man " - 63

 two-man " - 81

(c) Feeder Buses, Geelong North Route

With peak traffic density as now existing, the unfortunate aspect of buses acting as feeders to the North tram service would be the accentuation of the problem we now face to usefully employ the excess of man-power available before and after the peak periods. We estimate that early morning general services would require augmentation to get the large volume of workers to the city from 7 a.m. onwards, and the same would apply to the p.m. peak services which are already severely taxed.

The provision of additional services on the North route itself and the cover necessary to meet the unusual overtime shifts now being worked on both week days and Saturdays could make it necessary for us to create ten additional morning shifts, and also ten additional p.m. shifts to handle this traffic. This would represent roughly £20,000 per annum in operation labour costs alone. This is not attractive to the tramways even if the scheme were practicable from the bus operators' point of view, or acceptable to the passengers who have become accustomed to a direct more or less door to door service on a concession fare basis.

(Cont'd.)

(d) Broken Time (Traffic Employees)

We have looked into the question of using traffic employees on manual work, such as car cleaning, during the periods between actual traffic duty.

Shift work for tramways traffic men may be straight or broken shifts, the latter being defined by an unpaid period of not less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours between actual duty periods. Broken shifts are unpopular and are restricted as far as it is practicable. Paid time not actually worked is strictly limited and confined to "stand-by" duty, shift "spares", and "make-up" time. "Stand-by" duty is generally confined to any period of less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours which cannot be eliminated in the compilation of duty schedules. Shift "spares" are limited to a maximum of one man to cover each shift and, of course, are unpredictable as to availability for other work. "Make-up" time, i.e. build up of the time roll to 40 hours for a week when less than 40 hours is actually worked, is practically non-existent in our recently revised rosters.

From these explanations the possibilities of replacing car cleaning or other maintenance personnel by the diversion of traffic employees is too irregular and too uncertain to be of much economic value. There are also other adverse features, such as the remote location of the maintenance depots from the traffic control centre at Ballarat and Bendigo, and the time allowances that would be necessary to enable employees to change their clothing and clean up generally. From past experience, we add there is every reason to anticipate that stiff Tramway Union opposition to this practice would result, even though we would, in effect, be paying a higher rate of pay for the work being performed.

(e) Light Traffic Economics

A point raised concerned the economics of operating tram cars during very light traffic periods in comparison with lighter vehicles in the form of seven seater motor cars. We agree that probably from 8 p.m. until late theatre traffic, such cars could cater for most of the traffic now offering, being assisted by their ability to cut trip times very substantially, if necessary. Large vehicles would be necessary to handle theatre crowds so that only a limited period can be visualised as a possibility for the use of smaller units.

The net saving by the withdrawal of a tram car for a limited period with operation wages continuing would be about 7½d. per mile, which consists of electricity and wear and tear. It is unlikely that motor cars could be provided by the Commission to operate at less than this figure of 7½d. per mile. On the other hand, if the question had in mind the substitute operation of hire cars as stage carriages, we would need to be relieved of the payment of traffic wages during the period from the withdrawal of trams to the theatre traffic. This would necessitate the conversion of

p.m. shifts into broken shifts and, apart from the difficulty in providing an average duty period of eight hours per day by reason of the shortened hours, the increase in the proportion of broken shifts would be strongly opposed by the employees. We suggest that, even if a Conciliation Commissioner upheld our actions, he would, in all probability, award a special penalty wage rate for broken shift disabilities so that the position could be considerably worsened.

(Sgd.) K. MURRAY