

1967

VICTORIA.

REPORT

from

THE PARLIAMENTARY PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

on

THE PLEMY ROAD, PRESTON, TRAMWAY EXTENSION INQUIRY

PRESENTED TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR
IN COUNCIL PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF
THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT (No. 6352)

MEMBERS OF THE THIRTEENTH COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The Honorable Archibald Keith Bradbury
The Honorable William Montgomery Campbell

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

William Laurence Floyd, Esquire
Alan Henry Scalan, Esquire
Thomas Campion Trewin, Esquire
John Thomas Wilton, Esquire.

Chairman:	The Honorable Archibald Keith Bradbury
Vice-Chairman:	William Laurence Floyd, Esquire
Secretary:	Hugh William Caffrey, Esquire

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

R E P O R T

The Public Works Committee, to which the Governor in Council referred for inquiry and report in accordance with the provisions of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board Act, No. 6311, and the Public Works Committee Act, No. 6352 as to a Special Construction Scheme for the Extension of an Electric Tramway in Plenty Road, City of Preston, has the honour to report as follows :-

THE SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION SCHEME

Purpose of Tramway

The proposed tramway (which will extend from a point at a radial distance of 6.3 miles to a point at a radial distance of 6.9 miles from the General Post Office, Melbourne) will provide increased transport facilities for the population along and beyond the route.

Route

The route of the proposed tramway is along Plenty Road commencing in Plenty Road 70 feet south of the southern boundary of Tyler Street and connecting with the existing electric tramway in Plenty Road (defined as existing electric tramway No.9 Part II of the Sixth Schedule of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act 1958) thence by a double track north-westerly along Plenty Road to a single track terminus situated in right-of-way reserved exclusively for tramway purposes within the central median strip of Plenty Road approximately four chains north-east of Boldwood Parade.

The total distance is approximately 0.7 miles.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board

The Board was represented by Major-General R.J.H. Risson, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., O.St.J., E.D., B.E., M.I.C.E., M.I.E. Aust., R. Inst. E., F.A.I.M. Mr. Risson outlined as to how the scheme emanated from a request in 1965 by the City of Preston that the existing tramway in Plenty Road be extended to ease traffic congestion at the present terminus at Tyler Street. Also embodied in the initial approach from the City of Preston was an enquiry as to whether the Board was considering an extension to serve the proposed La Trobe University.

Mr. Risson enlightened the Committee as to the basic features of the Scheme and they are summarized as follows:-

Existing Services

(a) Tramways

The Board operates an electric tram service from the existing terminus in Plenty Road south of Tyler Street to the central business area of the City of Melbourne.

(b) Private Bus Routes

The following privately owned omnibus services are licensed by the Transport Regulation Board to operate on routes which are along or cross over the portion of Plenty Road along which it is proposed to construct this Electric tramway.

<u>Prescribed Route Number</u>	<u>Route</u>
46A	Regent-Janefield-Crosswell-Northland Shopping Centre.
69A	Northland-Preston-Coburg.
122A	Epping-Preston-Northland.
134A	Regent-Kingsbury-Northland.
135A	Regent-East Preston-Northland.
138A	Reservoir-Keon Park-Northland.
144A	Regent-Northland-South Preston.

(c) Railways

The Princes Bridge to Epping electric railway is the nearest railway service to this proposed electric tramway. The nearest railway station to the existing tramway terminus in Plenty Road at Tyler Street is Regent

(c) Railways (contd)

at a distance of approximately 0.7 miles by public right-of-way whereas the nearest railway station to the proposed electric tramway terminus is Reservoir, a distance of approximately 1.2 miles by public right-of-way.

Type of Track Construction

The tram tracks will be constructed along the centre of Plenty Road in accordance with the requirements of Section 58 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act 1958.

Engineering Aspects

There are no engineering problems of a major nature associated with this scheme which will require the insertion of special legislation to authorize the construction of this electric tramway.

Estimated Cost of Construction

The original estimate of the cost of constructing 0.7 miles of double track electric tramway along the proposed route was \$225,000, made up as follows:-

Permanent Way construction	\$170,000
Overhead electric wiring and associated equipment	\$ 30,000
Alterations to existing services	\$ 25,000
	<u>\$225,000</u>

These estimates were based on costs as at the 1st. January, 1967.

Finance

The cost of the construction of this electric tramway will be paid by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board.

Sections Tolls Fares and Charges

The proposed extension will constitute one additional fare section of 7 cents for adults and 4 cents for children under the age of 14 years.

The corresponding through fares to the terminus at Spencer Street in the City of Melbourne will be 28 cents for adults and 13 cents for children.

The fares tolls and charges over this section combined with existing sections will be dealt with by By-laws pursuant to Section 65 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act 1958.

PROPOSED SERVICE AND ROLLING STOCK REQUIREMENTS.

It is estimated that the annual mileage of the electric trams along the proposed tramway will be 90,000 miles.

The proposed service will require one additional electric tram which will be provided from the existing fleet.

Probable Revenue and Annual Charges
For the First Five Years of Operation

Based on fares and costs as at 1st. January, 1967, the Tramways Board estimated that revenue operating expenses and standing charges of the proposed tramway during its first five years of operation would be :-

Year	<u>Estimated Revenue</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Standing Charges</u>	<u>Estimated Surplus</u>	<u>Estimated Deficit</u>
1st	\$61,000	\$45,000	\$17,000	-	\$1,000
2nd	62,000	45,000	17,000	-	-
3rd	62,000	45,000	17,000	-	-
4th	62,500	45,000	17,000	500	-
5th.	62,500	45,000	17,000	500	-

The revenue estimates were based on surveys of potential patronage which were undertaken by the Metropolitan Transportation Committee and the Tramways Board.

Possible Extension Beyond Boldrewood Parade

The Tramways Board receives no financial assistance from the Government for capital works, so it can only contemplate new services where the likely revenue will be sufficient to meet interest and redemption as well as operational costs.

In reply to suggestions that the scheme be projected to serve La Trobe University and Grimshaw Street, (respectively 1.9 miles and 3.4 miles from the present terminus), the Board submitted that the loss on operations would be quite considerable. The Board pointed to the sparsity of population along the route and showed that, over and above the cost of track construction, heavy expenditure would be incurred for provision of a new electric sub-station. A new sub-station to serve an extension to the University Entrance has been estimated to cost \$202,250 and to Grimshaw Street, \$353,250.

Another point raised by Mr. Risson was that the trip from the proposed terminus at Boldrewood Parade to the city would occupy 40 minutes which, in his opinion, is about the maximum distance that people are prepared to travel by tram.

Although it voiced the fore-mentioned objections to extending the tramway beyond Boldrewood Parade the Board would be prepared to consider such a proposal if the Preston City Council would enter into an agreement to re-imburse the losses during the first five years after construction. Provision for such an arrangement is embodied in Division 5 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act, 1958, entitled "Construction of Certain Tramways Under Municipal Guarantee".

In regard to servicing La Trobe University, Mr. Risson highlighted a survey made on 5th. July, 1967, when the student enrolment and staff numbered approximately 700. The survey showed that 26 single trips were made by tramway buses between the city and the University. The first bus left the city at 7.47 a.m. and the last at 9.40 p.m. A total of 38 passengers travelled to the University and 41 travelled from the University. Mr. Risson conceded that the patronage will increase along with the University population, but he emphasized that concession fares considerably reduce the financial reward from student patronage. The Board estimates an overall loss of \$750,000 per year on student concessions.

Revised Cost Estimates

On request from the Committee, the Tramways Board provided revised cost estimates. The revised estimates, submitted on 25th. October, 1967, show a total capital expenditure of \$238,000 and operational losses as displayed in the following table:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Estimated Revenue</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Standing Charges</u>	<u>Estimated Surplus</u>	<u>Estimated Deficit</u>
1st	\$61,000	\$45,900	\$17,500	-	\$2,400
2nd	62,000	45,900	17,500	-	1,400
3rd	62,000	45,900	17,500	-	1,400
4th	62,500	45,900	17,500	-	900
5th	62,500	45,900	17,500	-	900

The City of Preston

The City of Preston was represented by the City Engineer, Mr. R.B. Bramham, C.E., F.W.S., M.D.S., A.M.I.E. Aust. Mr. Bramham related the events following an approach from the Preston Chamber of Commerce to the Council concerning the traffic congestion at the shopping centre which surrounds the Plenty Road-Tyler Street intersection. The Council requested the Tramways Board to consider the extension of the tramway beyond the present terminus at the shopping centre and also questioned the Board as to its intentions concerning an extension to serve La Trobe University and future development in the north-eastern sector of the municipality.

Mr. Bramham explained that the problem of traffic congestion had since been considerably relieved by the Tramways Board effecting a "Y" junction at the terminus and by the Council acquiring property and effecting some road-widening and restricted parking.

A matter of concern to the Council is the fear that the scheme would heighten the hazardous nature of the Plenty Road-Boldrewood Parade intersection. Mr. Bramham submitted a plan for an underground route commencing slightly north of Dorrington Avenue and ending at Barwon Avenue or Loddon Avenue, dependent on the length of the tramway extension. The additional cost involved would be \$ \$245,000 for an underground route terminating at Barwon Avenue and \$497,000 terminating at Loddon Avenue.

In regard to the proposition that the scheme be projected to Grinshaw Street under Municipal Guarantee, the Council advised that it was not in favour of the proposal.

The Victorian Railways

The Victorian Railways, represented by Commissioner's Representative, Mr. J.N. Lade, opposed the scheme. The Railways Department contends that the existing facilities provided by the private buses and the Melbourne-Epping rail service give an adequate service to the residents in the locality of the proposed extension. Mr. Lade pointed out that four bus routes parallel the proposed extension and proceed to the present tram terminus and beyond to the Regent Railway Station. In his opinion, the private buses give frequent and reliable service and they co-ordinate satisfactorily with tram and train timetables.

Mr. Lade expounded the virtues of the railways service for long haulage as against the slower service provided by the tramways. Assurance was given that there is ample capacity to cater for many more passengers on the Epping Line. The Railways Department also holds the view that the customers for the new tramway service would derive from the present rail and private bus patrons, rather than from car owners.

Committee of Residents in Support of the Tramway Extension

Evidence on behalf of the Tramway Extension Committee was tendered by the President, Mr. T. O'Connor, and Mrs. M. Harper. The evidence was supported by a petition signed by 3,700 residents. The submissions of this Committee favour the extension and strongly urge its projection to Settlement Road (3.6 miles from Tyler Street terminus).

Mr. O'Connor described the existing bus service as inefficient, inadequate and irregular. The local Committee hopes for a night tramway bus service as well as the extended tramway because, at present, there is no public transport between midnight and 6.15 a.m.

Further points raised by the Extension Committee are summarized hereunder :-

- (i) Working people need regular and frequent transport at reasonable cost. It is more expensive to use two services than pay one through-fare.
- (ii) Many workers travel by car if public transport is unsatisfactory, thus contributing to traffic congestion.
- (iii) Mothers with young children find the use of two services burdensome and expensive. Trams are better suited to the carriage of prams than buses.
- (iv) Pensioners' concessions are available on trams, but not on private buses.
- (v) Buses contribute to traffic congestion at Tyler Street. A bus can not pull away until the driver has collected all the fares, whereas trams can move off as soon as all passengers are aboard.
- (vi) Trams do not contribute to air pollution.

East Preston Traders' Association

The Traders' Association, represented by Mr. E.H. Rushton, contend that the area is well served by private buses and, this being the case, the expense of the tramway scheme can not be justified. The Association would prefer to see money spent on off-street parking facilities rather than the relatively short extension of the tramway to ease the traffic congestion at Tyler Street terminus. An argument used by Mr. Rushton against the proposal was that the short 0.7 mile extension crossed two major roads, nine streets and a school crossing and terminated at Boldrewood Parade which is already considered a hazardous intersection.

Plenty Road Residents

Plenty Road residents along the route were represented by Mr. A.K. Ross. Mr. Ross's submissions showed that these people were opposed to the proposal, the main objections being as summarized hereunder :-

- (i) Action taken to date has already greatly relieved the traffic congestion at Tyler Street terminus.
- (ii) The effective width of Plenty Road will be reduced by the tramway.
- (iii) Traffic congestion and increase in hazards at existing danger spots on Plenty Road.
- (iv) The scheme is costly and unnecessary.
- (v) Trams are noisy and contribute to devaluation of property.

The evidence was supported by a petition signed by 102 residents adjacent to the proposed route.

La Trobe University

The La Trobe University was represented by its Administrative Officer, Mr. D. Edser. La Trobe University was established by the Government in 1964 and lectures commenced this year. The population is expected to progressively increase to 17,000 students and staff by 1977. Mr. Edser predicts that, because of lack of residential accommodation, many students will be residing in nearby suburbs and will require public transport to the University. Many will travel direct from their homes in suburbs throughout the metropolis. The forecast is that a maximum of 40% of the University population will be provided with residential accommodation. The University supports the scheme and requested that consideration be given to a further extension to Grimshaw Street.

The Private Bus Operators

The private bus operators that serve the locality of the proposed scheme were represented by Transport Consultant, Mr. H.J. Lawrence, F.A.S.A., M.Inst.T., F.A.I.M. The bus operators oppose the scheme and their main objections are summarized as follows :-

- (i) The original reason for extending the route because of traffic congestion at Tyler Street is no longer valid.
- (ii) Bearing in mind that the transport needs of the locality are already accommodated by private buses, the expenditure of \$238,000 on the scheme would be a prodigious waste of money.
- (iii) The additional revenue gained by the Tramways Board would be at the expense of the Railways Department and the private bus operators.
- (iv) The dis-organization of the present transport system in the locality would be of greater moment than the benefits that would accrue.
- (v) The traffic hazard at Boldwood Parade would be increased if the scheme was implemented.

Mr. Lawrence contended that the estimates of revenue submitted by the Tramways Board were over-optimistic. He assessed that, in the early years of the scheme, the revenue would approximate between \$35,000 and \$42,000 annually provided that the existing bus services along the route were discontinued. He submitted that, if the private buses were permitted to continue, the annual revenue to the Tramways Board would not exceed \$20,000. Mr. Lawrence based his estimates on counts taken by bus operators along the proposed route, a study of the surrounding area and after a critical study of the survey made by the Tramways Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Committee.

Mr. Lawrence complained that there is no provision for compensation of de-franchised bus operators when their service is replaced by a tramway, as is the case when they are replaced by tramway buses.

By way of answer to earlier criticism, Mr. Lawrence gave details of the concessions provided by bus operators in the Preston area. They include half adult fare for children up to 15 years of age or in school uniform, irrespective of age, who are travelling to or from school; children's weekly tickets; adult's weekly tickets; transfer tickets from one bus service to another; free travel to T.P.I. pensioners.

The Transport Regulation Board

The Transport Regulation Board was represented by the Secretary, Mr. B.P. Kay. Mr. Kay outlined the function of the Metropolitan Transportation Committee concerning a study of the transport requirements of the whole of the Melbourne metropolitan area. He drew attention to the affinity of that study with the consideration of the Plenty Road Tramways Scheme and questioned the desirability of both enquiries proceeding at the same time.

Mr. Kay submitted that the private buses occasioned no capital expenditure of public money, whereas the Special Scheme involved \$238,000. He considers it anomalous that defranchised bus operators are not compensated when replaced by a tramway. A further point emphasized by Mr. Kay was the importance the Transport Regulation Board places on the bus connections between Regent station and north and north-east Preston.

The Traffic Commission

Mr. J.D. Thorpe, Chairman of the Traffic Commission, considers the accident rate at Boldrewood Parade-Plenty Road intersection as rather high. He expects the accident rate to decrease from 16 in recent years to about 6½ per year after traffic lights are installed. He said that the Commission has approved a subsidy towards the installation of traffic lights but limitation of funds has delayed the transaction. He indicated that the matter should be finalized within the next three years, possibly 1968.

The Metropolitan Transportation Committee

Mr. Risson also gave evidence as a Member of the Metropolitan Transportation Committee. He gave an assurance that the findings of the Public Works Committee in this Inquiry would be accepted by the Metropolitan Transportation Committee in the course of its overall study of metropolitan transport.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee has reached the following conclusions :-

1. The original problem of traffic congestion at the existing tramway terminus at Tyler Street has been relieved considerably by the following action :-
 - (i) The acquisition of adjacent property by the Preston City Council.
 - (ii) The widening of Plenty Road at the terminus.
 - (iii) The introduction of parking restrictions.
 - (iv) The installation of a "Y" junction by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board.
2. Existing transport (namely - the nearby Melbourne Epping Railway and Private buses, along with the existing tramway) appears to be adequate for residents in the immediate locality of the proposed 0.7 mile extension.
3. In regard to the question of extension beyond Boldrewood Parade, there is insufficient evidence to indicate that the potential patronage in the immediate future would justify the expenditure involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends :-

1. That the Special Construction Scheme for Extension of an Electric Tramway in Plenty Road, Preston, be not approved.
2. That, when La Trobe University is more fully operational and the trend of development in the north-eastern sector of the Preston area has been established, the question of extending the Plenty Road Tramway Service by tram or Tramsways bus to Crinshaw Street be investigated.

DISSENT

Mr. J.T. Wilton, M.L.A., dissented from Conclusion No. 2 and Recommendation No. 1. He considers that the residents in the immediate locality of the proposed scheme would be better served by a tramway than the existing private bus service. He contends that the Special Scheme should be implemented as a first stage to the eventual extension to serve La Trobe University and the settled areas of the northern and north-eastern sectors of the City of Preston.

Six
Signatures
of
the Committee
were attached
in this
position

Signed by.

Secretary,
Public Works Committee,
Parliament House,
MELBOURNE.

20th. December, 1967.