

Our trams set to star in Seattle

By GERRY CARMAN

SEATTLE, that West Coast American city famous for its drizzle, expects to challenge the popularity of the cable car and Fisherman's Wharf in sunny San Francisco, thanks to a few trams from drizzly Melbourne.

Although sometimes the objects of scorn in their antipodean home, three 60-year-old green trundlers will start operating in May along the famous Burlington Northern Railroad route on the booming waterfront in Seattle, the capital of Washington State.

Seattle's city fathers and businessmen have put their faith and \$2.2 million into the project and expect the trams to become as big an attraction as the charming cable cars in 'Frisco.

"We think that a combination of our trams from Melbourne and our waterfront, with all its magnificent seafood restaurants, will give the cable cars and Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco a run for their money," Seattle's leading tram advocate, Councillor George Benson, says.

He persuaded Seattle city council to contribute \$1 million and the city businessmen another \$1.2 million towards the cost of the project, but some of them even took up paintbrushes and helped to give the trundlers a fresh coat of green paint.

"They volunteered to tax themselves," Councillor Benson says with considerable relish.

He proudly shows off the slightly modified trams under tarpaulin wraps at the Seattle Metropolitan Transit System's maintenance centre, in the suburb of Tukwila, adding: "I'm a real tram aficionado . . . this thing has been my baby since 1974."

They sell overseas at bargain basement prices. The enthusiastic for each tram to be shipped across the Pacific.

and obviously persuasive Mr Benson paid \$5000 for each of four W2 trams built in the 1920s. (Three will operate the service and the fourth will be stripped for parts.) It cost another \$20,000

Another \$25,000 has been spent refurbishing each tram. They will



A new home: a Melbourne green tram is unloaded in Seattle.

look the same as the ones operating in Melbourne, except that one side has been sealed, changes have been made to the driver's cabin and a public address system installed.

So highly regarded are Melbourne's trams now in Seattle — especially the price — that the city's most famous restaurateur, Mr Andy Yourkanin, is after one. He runs a chain of restaurants comprising old railroad cars linked together with walkways. He would like to put special rubber tyres on a Melbourne tram and run it from one of his restaurants to one of the city's landmarks — the Seattle King Dome, the venue for national league basketball games.

Seattle's first tram will run down the newly-laid 1.6 kilometres of track, from Pioneer Square to Pler 70, on 29 May. Full services will start on 4 June. "Anyone from Melbourne will be welcome on the tram."

A
Tab
sett
alar
Afr
U
the
for
ona
fun
the
hea
era
Afr
bea
try
T
Nat
kaa
par
Eng
the
unc
ive
vin
to
gro
suf
dor
ind
me
of
T
pol
of
trib
Afr
sw
mig
in
rel
bee
plo
mix
con
por
pat
cep
cow
B
tion
tus
gro
the
hav
Nati
on
give
non-
up
whi
scu
bot
tion
into
bla
can
Sta
ser
T
hej
me
of
mi
in
So
Pri
tle
pov
this
MP
iste
ula.
O
tha
pec
som
into
lead

H
a
I
com
in a
vers
"sho
run
Th
spons
a wo
Austr
ism a
decri
The
munit
the p
growi
longer
mercia
tion
ment
This
posal
thorit
traliar
by P
sugge

George Benson, says.

He persuaded Seattle city council to contribute \$1 million and the city businessmen another \$1.2 million towards the cost of the project, but some of them even took up paintbrushes and helped to give the trundlers a fresh coat of green paint.

"They volunteered to tax themselves," Councillor Benson says with considerable relish.

He proudly shows off the slightly modified trams under tarpaulin wraps at the Seattle Metropolitan Transit System's maintenance centre, in the suburb of Tukwila, adding: "I'm a real tram aficionado . . . this thing has been my baby since 1974."

They sell overseas at bargain basement prices. The enthusiastic for each tram to be shipped across the Pacific.

and obviously persuasive Mr Benson paid \$5000 for each of four W2 trams built in the 1920s. (Three will operate the service and the fourth will be stripped for parts.) It cost another \$20,000

Another \$25,000 has been spent refurbishing each tram. They will



A new home: a Melbourne green tram is unloaded in Seattle.

look the same as the ones operating in Melbourne, except that one side has been sealed, changes have been made to the driver's cabin and a public address system installed.

So highly regarded are Melbourne's trams now in Seattle — especially the price — that the city's most famous restaurateur, Mr Andy Yourkanin, is after one. He runs a chain of restaurants comprising old railroad cars linked together with walkways. He would like to put special rubber tyres on a Melbourne tram and run it from one of his restaurants to one of the city's landmarks — the Seattle King Dome, the venue for national league basketball games.

Seattle's first tram will run down the newly-laid 1.6 kilometres of track, from Pioneer Square to Pier 70, on 29 May. Full services will start on 4 June. "Anyone from Melbourne will be welcome at the inaugural ceremony," Mr Benson said.

"A lot of American cities are realising, belatedly, the value of a good public transport system and we in Seattle are very proud of ours. We think the street cars (trams) are going to fit in real well . . . they will be the only regular public transport system on the western side of the city along Puget Sound."

Like the city's pioneer monorail system, operating less than a kilometre to the north of the tram route, services will run at 15 minute intervals. The fare will be 35 cents.

The monorail, built for the World Fair in Seattle 20 years ago, needs about \$7 million worth of improvements. But it remains the only form of public transport in the United States making a profit — a record \$60,000 in 1980.

Seattle, with a population of just over one million, is served by a Metro Transit System operating a fleet of 1000 buses and 109 trolley buses, with 95 more on order. The trolley bus network covers 88 kilometres.

The city originally also had a tram system but it stopped working in 1939. The new service will curve along a rejuvenated waterfront, where old sheds have been converted into restaurants and shops. On the other side, rows of office blocks are being built or planned.

Seattle's elders believe that the historic nature of the route, along the old Burlington rail line developed for the gold rush northwards to Alaska, will be a good omen. They expect the former Melbourne trams to hit paydirt for them.

10-3-82
ABE