

### CHAIRMAN'S OVERSEAS VISIT

With the approval of the Honourable the Minister of Transport, and in accordance with the Board's policy of keeping abreast of the latest developments in passenger transport throughout the world, the Chairman of the Board is at present overseas studying street public transport in Great Britain, the Continent of Europe and in North America.

Reports received from the Chairman indicate that he is greatly indebted to the transport undertakings he has visited for their ready co-operation and frank information and is impressed by the marked re-awakening of interest in public transport in both Europe and America and by the recognition that it is a vital need if big cities are not to become choked by increasing road traffic.

Separation of public transport vehicles from automobile traffic, commonly by putting the public transport underground, is receiving wide-spread attention overseas where it is recognised that the capital cost of such separation is properly a charge, not on the public transport passengers, but on the whole community that benefits from the resultant improved traffic flow.

### UNDERGROUND TRAMWAYS

The Board in recent years has been obliged to keep its operations continually under review and to plan for the future, guided a deal by experience of other big cities overseas, with which it keeps in touch by technical literature, its own membership of the American Transit Association and of the International Union of Public Transport, and a certain amount of semi-official correspondence with transport leaders overseas.

Prior to the Chairman's departure abroad and following the firm decision to build a Melbourne underground railway, the Board had given the subject more precise and detailed consideration.

The principal factor affecting both public transport and private transport in Melbourne is one common to all big cities the world over, more acute in some than in others, but in few outside North America, perhaps, as acute as in the largest Australian cities. That problem is traffic congestion arising from the rapidly increasing use of private automobiles, in many cases aggravated by inadequate street widths: Melbourne, of course, with some exceptions—notably such as High Street, St. Kilda; Bridge Road as far east as Church Street; and Sydney Road beyond Brunswick Road—is very much better off in this particular than most other cities of its size.

With motor vehicles already one for less than each four of the population, and doubling every ten years or so, the time is rapidly approaching when the present free movement of vehicles will be impossible if most go to the centre of the city, as has been their custom.

"Free-ways," by whatever name called, are not the answer to the problem, or they are not the answer if they run from the outskirts into the centre of the city with very small increased provision for the vehicles when they get there. Without that provision they merely add, and add greatly, to the central area congestion. On the other hand, if adequate parking space is to be provided in the centre of the city for the greatly increased number of cars requiring it, then parking must take up a quite unacceptable proportion of the city area.

Despite the evidently large number of motor cars in the streets, they, of course, carry only a fraction of the people travelling to and from the centre of Melbourne—the people who do its business and are the very reason for its existence. Investigations, a few years ago, showed that 44% of the people who come to the centre of Melbourne and go home again travel by rail, 42% by tram and bus, leaving about one in seven to travel by other means, mainly private motor cars. The proportion using motor cars has gone up appreciably since then, but the overwhelming number still travel by public transport, and will continue to do so. For that reason, among others, the Board strongly supported the proposal to build an underground railway in Melbourne.

The underground railway will in the main cater for the growing number of outer suburban passengers. It will divide the rail passengers between the present Princes Bridge-Flinders Street access and the new Latrobe Street access, and reduce to some degree the number of people travelling up and down Swanston Street between Flinders Street and Bourke Street. It is unlikely that it will greatly reduce the number of trams required in the City area.

Beyond a radius of about eight miles, of course, it is to be expected that the railways (surface railways in the outer areas connecting with the underground as they reach the city) will carry the bulk of city travellers. The Board has always accepted that a journey beyond that radius is too far normally for regular travel by trams.

Inevitably the number of motor cars in use, and therefore the street space they require, will continue to grow rapidly. Even with street parking prohibited, as it must be in time, there will not be sufficient carriageway for all the motor vehicles wishing to use it and also for public transport. It follows, in the Board's opinion, that some portion of the total traffic will need to be moved to another level.

Monorails have been suggested but, the Board fears, in the mistaken belief that they can be put along the side of the street without interference with other installations or property owners and the like. That is very doubtful. They are in reality only another form, admittedly an improved form, of elevated railways. And if anyone were to suggest an elevated railway in the old connotation of the term now it would get a most unfriendly reception.

Apart from a monorail or other elevated way, another way of separating traffic is to put one type underground. There is little doubt if that sort of separation had to be made in Melbourne's streets, it is the trams that should go underground, leaving the present surfaces for ordinary motor traffic. Of course, if the trams give up their position on the road surface for the benefit of motor vehicles, most obviously it could not be at the cost of the trams or other public vehicles or of their passengers: the cost would have to be borne by everyone.

The Board's plan, which was conveyed to the Melbourne City Council during the year, in response to the Council's request for information on future tramway proposals which may affect the City of Melbourne, provides for the Bourke Street tramway route to be underground from Spencer Street with an extension to serve the new railway station, along Bourke Street, Spring Street, Evelyn Street, Nicholson Street, coming to the surface before Gertrude Street, with a branch easterly under Victoria Parade, coming to the surface in the reserve at Lansdowne Street with a junction at Brunswick Street also being underground. Another branch is planned turning west under Victoria Parade and Latrobe Street, coming to the surface at Exhibition Street.

The Swanston Street tramway route is planned to be separated from the street surface from Nolan Street to Queensberry Street with a branch turning west under a'Beckett Street, thence under Elizabeth Street past the Victoria Market to Pelham Street with a branch westerly along Queensberry Street, coming to the surface at Howard Street, then on the surface along Queensberry Street to connect with the existing tramway.

The abandonment of the Collins Street tramway route from Spencer Street, along Collins Street, MacArthur Street, Gisborne Street to Victoria Parade, is included as is the abandonment of the Elizabeth Street tramway route from Flinders Street to a'Beckett Street and the route in Victoria and Errol Streets from Swanston Street to Queensberry Street. The tram traffic from the northern part of Elizabeth Street, instead of travelling down to the present terminus at Elizabeth Street, would be re-routed under Swanston Street and the tram traffic along Collins Street would be re-routed under Bourke Street.

One of the advantages to be gained would be the removal of surface tram traffic from the inner city area, the only routes remaining being Latrobe Street in the north, Flinders Street in the south, William Street and Spencer Street in the west. The underground tramway along Bourke Street, situated centrally between the northern and southern sections of the underground railway route, would give easy access to passengers from Spencer Street Station. The tramway under Swanston

Street would serve Flinders Street and Princes Bridge Stations and the new station on the northern section of the underground route.

It must be understood that the foregoing is a tentative plan and is subject to developments in the City during the next decade or two and the views of other authorities interested in city transport. It has been put forward to emphasise the need for comprehensive and detailed planning for the future. A reproduction of the layout proposed is included at the end of this report.