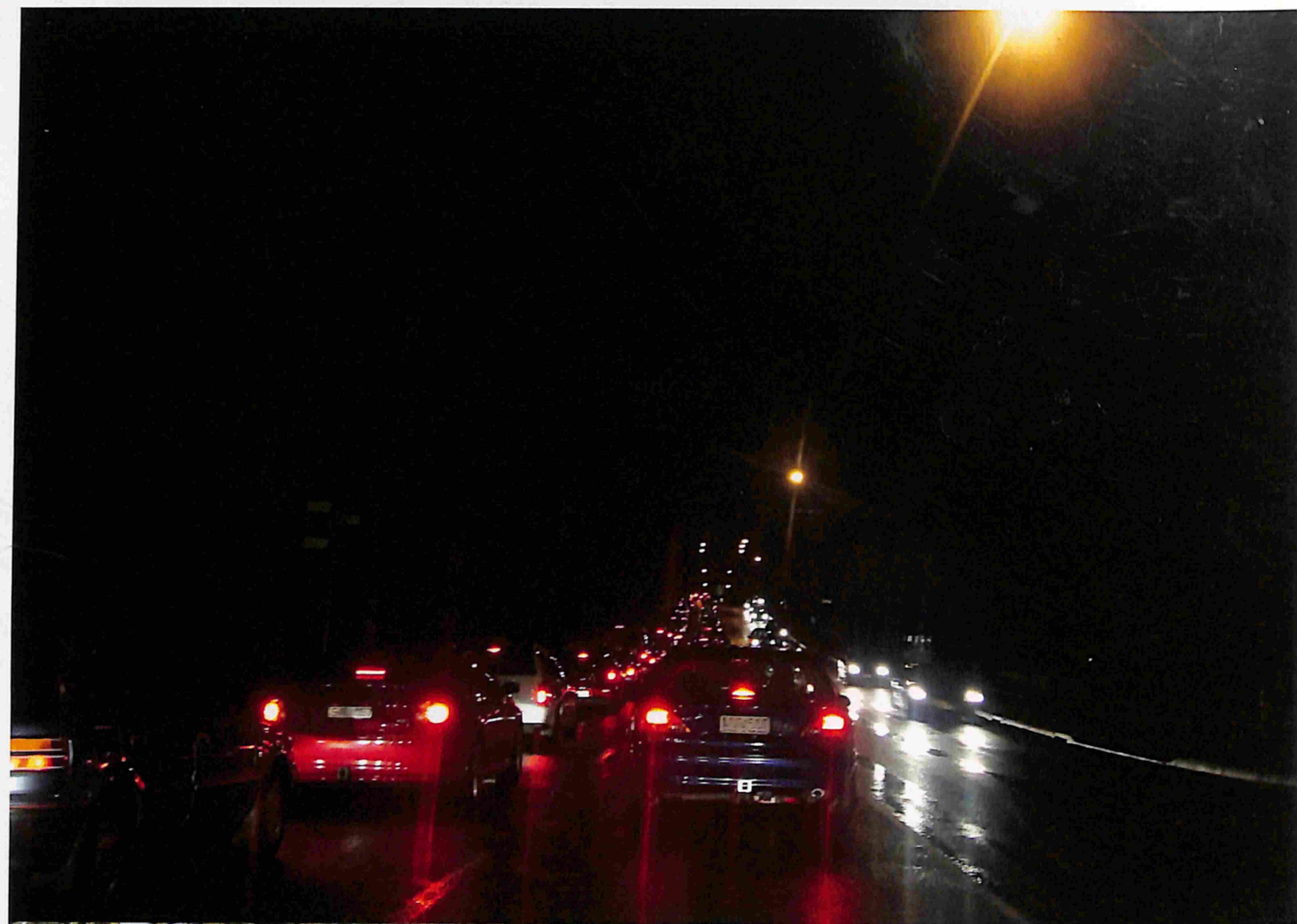


Transport Plan – An Alternative Option

The 2010-2020 Plan





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Photos by Michael Angelico, David Stosser, Michael Coley, Oscar Verlander and Scott Martin

For further information visit <http://www.smartpassengers.org.au/2020.html>

Executive Summary

Smart Passengers Inc is a not-for-profit group aiming to assist the state government and transport operators in improving the Melbourne public transport system. Probably the most significant form of assistance is giving feedback, from a passenger's perspective, on planned upgrades and improvements.

In this book we present "an alternative option" to current thinking about transport investment - with a focus on the use of existing transport corridors instead of building new ones.

The cornerstone of the plan is the Caulfield Quadruplication and Grade Separation Project - a 3-4 year project to upgrade Frankston, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines for all-day express services, at the same time removing nine level crossings.

This is coupled with the Newport-Laverton Capacity Upgrade project - a 2-3 year project to upgrade the Werribee line for faster journeys and better on-time running, including a new station at Maddox Road and the removal of three level crossings.

Other major improvements include:

- Minimum 10 minute off-peak frequency for most suburban trains
- 5 minute off-peak tram frequency on key tram corridors and 8 minute City Circle frequency
- Ten new and upgraded SmartBus routes
- 64 new V/Locity cars, including some with buffet facilities
- Saturday, Sunday and Public Holiday timetables (on rail, tram and bus) to be merged into a single "weekend" timetable, equal to or better than today's Saturday timetable in service level

The Caulfield Quadruplication and Grade Separation Project addresses the current level of overcrowding on the Frankston, Cranbourne and Pakenham lines. Population in the areas served by these lines has increased dramatically in recent years, and public transport capacity is limited. By adding two extra tracks to Oakleigh and one extra track to Moorabbin, capacity is provided for both express and stopping services to operate at high frequency. The elimination of nine level crossings will also give a smoother traffic flow in the area.

The Newport-Laverton Capacity Upgrade Project is similar in aims. By adding short sections of track in key positions, current problems where trains are delayed by other trains can be eliminated. This will result in capacity for both stopping and express services to operate at a regular ten-minute frequency. The project includes a new station at Newport West and the elimination of three level crossings.

Other improvements are also projected, which will benefit passengers on trains, trams and buses in Melbourne and regional Victoria. They range from extended hours in the Metlink call centre, through trials of new transport technologies, to extending tram routes to serve rail stations. These will further develop our current transport assets into a fully integrated transport system, simplifying travel and reducing Victorians' dependence on car ownership.

Some projects which have been proposed by the Department of Transport as part of the Victorian Transport Plan are not supported by Smart Passengers Inc in the short term (2011-2020). These include the rail tunnel from Footscray to Caulfield. We take the view that the \$7.5-8.5bn estimated for the tunnel is too much for the benefit it will have for commuters - if the same amount of money was spent on other projects, the benefit would be significantly greater. Melbourne will eventually need a rail tunnel to provide additional capacity, but there are many other more pressing transport needs. We believe that within the 2011-2020 timeframe, the array of proposals outlined here will deliver a better public transport system to more Victorians.

I commend to you the summary and detail pages which follow, and invite you to look through for projects which will improve the system in meeting your own transport needs.

Michael Angelico
President

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President’s Comment

The Victorian Transport Plan, released in 2008, is the government’s blueprint for the future of the transport system over the next decade. In the following pages Smart Passengers responds to the Victorian Transport Plan with a mix of endorsement, acceptance with suggestions for improvement, and rebuttal. Certain additional projects have also been suggested, which are expected to give a better result for Melbourne commuters per dollar of investment.

It is important to note that this document is written in the light of the Smart Passengers philosophy which says that a good transport strategy has a multi-pronged approach - it makes spot fixes where there are problems that can be addressed immediately, but also has a long-term goal. Planners should have an idea of what Melbourne’s transport system should look like in the distant future, to ensure today’s projects don’t need to be undone or expensively modified afterwards.

To this end, a document entitled “A World Class Transport System for Melbourne” is currently being prepared, based on a goal of 30-45 minute door-to-door journey times to the nearest activity centre for 95% of Melbourne’s households. This necessitates some major changes to infrastructure, which have been kept in mind while formulating the plans outlined in this book. For this reason, certain aspects of (for instance) the Caulfield Quadruplication and Grade Separation Project may seem incomplete. Readers can be assured that this is only a temporary measure to allow resources to be deployed to other urgent projects, and that a more comprehensive upgrade is planned.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work in the preparation of this document: Vice President David Stosser and committee member Ryan Tofts.

Also I would like to thank our panel of local transport spokespeople for their area-specific input, and the many contributors to our online Discussion Forums and the web site transporttextbook.com, for their ideas and feedback.

My family also deserve many thanks for their support and understanding when I kept unusual hours and talked like a broken record about transport needs and options.

Michael Angelico
President



Introduction

There is a growing awareness in the community today that a transport network based around private cars is unsustainable - the environmental impact, both in the short and long term, will destroy the liveability of a city and cause a number of knock-on social problems.

To create a viable alternative, it is necessary to improve the efficiency of our public transport system. Melbourne already has the makings of a truly world-class transport system - an extensive suburban rail network, a grid of major roads, a multi-modal fare system which is easy to use and understand, and a joint marketing body which handles timetables and customer queries.

However, there are some significant problems to be overcome before public transport becomes a viable alternative to private cars. Perhaps the most significant problem is that capacity is unable to meet demand in many places - resulting in overcrowded vehicles and late running.

Another is poor reliability of services, due for the most part to lack of maintenance of vehicles and infrastructure. This in turn is because passenger demand has been so high that preventative maintenance has been delayed in order to provide more services.

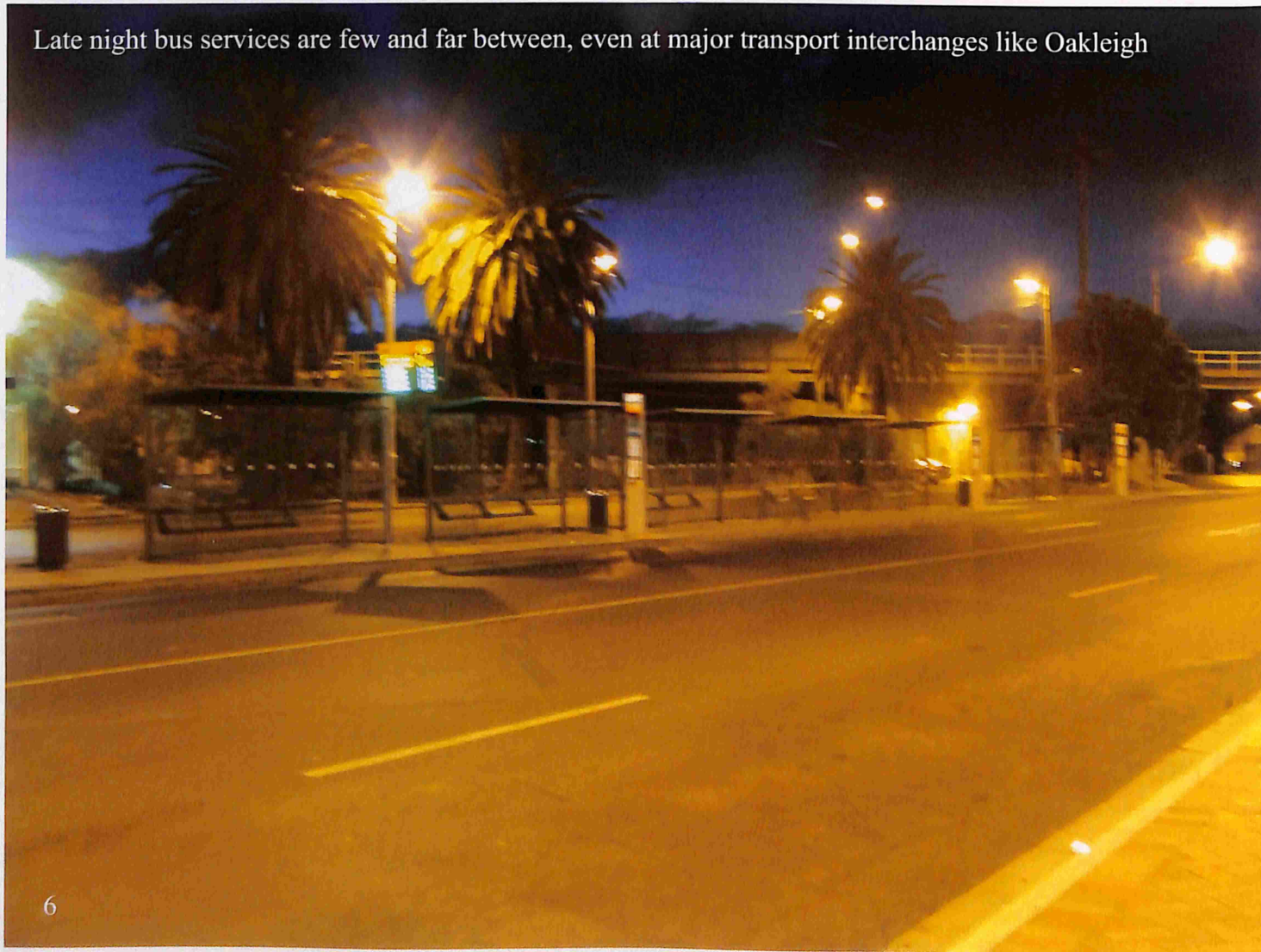
Other problems include inadequate levels of service (especially in outer suburbs and during off-peak times), a culture of vandalism, and badly designed feeder services.

The result, for passengers, is a public transport system which they cannot rely on to get them to their destination comfortably and in a reasonable time. This leads people who would otherwise use public transport to use private cars instead.

What can be done to change the situation?

The projects below are an attempt to deal with the worst problems by capitalising on the strengths which are already there.

Late night bus services are few and far between, even at major transport interchanges like Oakleigh



Key Transport Provision Philosophy

The following ideas are used with much success in other cities but have not been applied in Melbourne. Smart Passengers believes that they should be adopted as they have the potential for significant benefit to commuters.

Many of the projects outlined in this book are based on these three key ideas.

Turn-Up-And-Go timetables

When services run at a high enough frequency, passengers don't need to worry about timetables - they just "turn up" at any time, and "go" without any unreasonable delay. Obviously this is a significant increase in passenger convenience and makes public transport much more attractive. The effects are magnified when passengers need to change modes eg from a bus to a train - problems of "bad connections" are practically eliminated.

Smart Passengers research indicates that the minimum frequency which passengers will regard as turn-up-and-go quality is approximately 10 minutes, or 6 services per hour.

Turn-up-and-go service levels can bring about a change in commuter thinking, from rushing to catch a service at a specified time to simply catching the first service that arrives. Where frequencies are high enough, this change in thinking should be reflected in the introduction of "turn-up-and-go" style timetables:

- For the commuter, a frequency table would be published instead of a timetable, showing maximum waiting time between services instead of fixed times, plus total running time measured between multiple points on the route
- The internal Key Performance Indicator for service delivery, instead of cancellations and late running, would be statistical deviation from the published frequencies and running times.

Two-Tier Services

Smart Passengers proposes the widespread use of "Two-Tier" services on the longer suburban rail lines:

- "Outer tier" - Trains from the endpoint of the lines stopping all stations to an Interchange Station then running express to Flinders Street via the City Loop
- "Inner tier" - Trains from the Interchange stopping all stations direct to Flinders Street

Melbourne today has limited two-tier services on the Lilydale and Belgrave lines, with Blackburn as the Interchange Station. However this only applies during peak time, with single-tier services running during off-peak and weekends. A true two-tier arrangement runs both tiers at all times services are running.

True two-tier services have the following benefits:

- Better availability of faster journeys for people in outer suburbs (off-peak express services will reduce overcrowding on peak-time trips, as some passengers plan their schedules to catch express services)
- Separate services for people in inner suburbs (existing single-tier services on long lines are often impossible to board at inner stations due to the number of passengers boarding further out)
- More trains running direct to Flinders Street, taking the pressure off the few existing direct services

Multi-Modal Travel

The nature of public transport dictates that not all journeys will be able to be taken with a single trip. Therefore the system should be designed to make it as easy as possible for passengers to change from one vehicle to another. This includes making services as frequent as possible (to reduce waiting time) and designing interchanges to reduce the walking distance to a minimum.



Photo by Scott Martin

A summary of Smart Passengers policies

Bicycles and Public Transport

Bicycles are an environmentally and socially responsible form of transport, and their use in conjunction with public transport should be encouraged.

Use of bikes in conjunction with public transport falls into two broad categories:

- Where the passenger rides a bike to the public transport service and locks it up
- Where the passenger takes the bike onto the service for use at the other end (currently only available on trains)

The second option can be very inconvenient to other passengers under certain circumstances. New trains should take this into account and provide spaces for bikes, if this can be done without severely impacting passenger capacity.

Research should also be undertaken into options for allowing the carriage of bikes on buses and trams - assessing interstate and overseas trials, re-evaluating current regulations considering the current trend towards low-floor vehicles, and the design of devices that will help stow bikes out of the way of passengers.

With regard to the lock-up service, this is already widespread with many stations having either fully enclosed bike lockers or communal "Parkiteer" cages. Surveys should be taken periodically (eg every five years) to assess whether the number of lockers at any one station is sufficient for the demand.

Tram/Bus priority

Traffic priority should not be restricted to premium SmartBus and tram routes. Passengers everywhere should be given the benefit of faster journeys and more reliable timekeeping.

Trams

Several experiments have been undertaken into possible methods of reducing delays to trams, such as modified traffic light sequences and parking bans. The results of these should be assessed and the most effective method(s) deployed system wide.

In particular, measures to enforce laws about cars delaying trams (eg on-board cameras) should become widespread, to encourage motorists to change their habits and allow trams an uninterrupted journey.

Buses

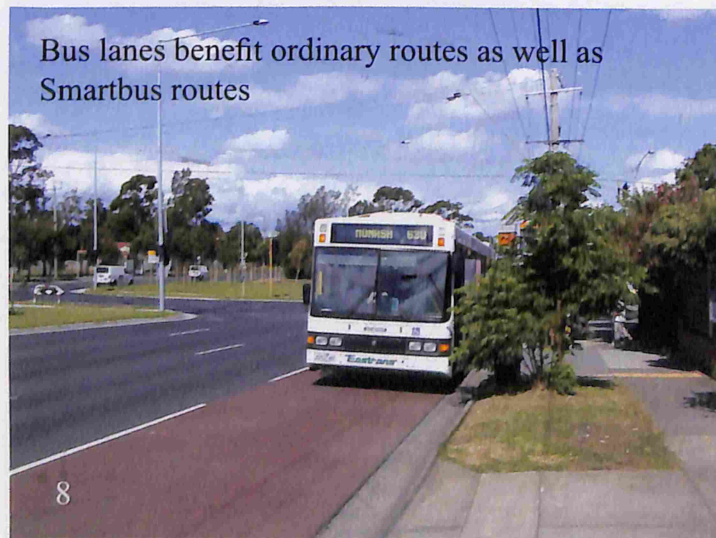
The SmartBus project has proved to be a success - higher frequency, faster journeys due to traffic priority, and more late-night services have led to popularity with passengers and therefore strong patronage growth. In the medium term, most bus routes in Melbourne should be upgraded to this standard. The most cost-effective method is a progressive rollout:

- On new SmartBus routes, space should be allowed on the electronic information displays for all the routes that use the bus stop. Probably the simplest way would be to have the display change at intervals like the SmartGuide displays which perform a similar function at tram stops.
- All new traffic light installations should be designed to make the addition of "B" lights simple and cheap, even if no bus route is planned to use them at the time of installation
- All new vehicles bought should be fitted with SmartBus equipment, even if they are not planned for use where SmartBus infrastructure is installed

- Priority lanes for buses should be progressively rolled out. Any projects undertaken by federal, state or local government, which involve the modification of intersections, should be required to provide a bus lane.

By this method, when the time comes to upgrade the route to full SmartBus standard, some of the work will be done already, reducing the cost of the project. It will also prevent wasted investment due to previous works having to be undone or heavily modified in order to accommodate the SmartBus infrastructure.

Contracts with manufacturers of SmartBus hardware should include standards for reliability and accuracy, which would force them to upgrade or replace faulty installations. Electronic displays that are inaccurate are worse than useless.



Bus lanes benefit ordinary routes as well as Smartbus routes

Public Transport Fares

The current fare system, with time-based ticketing and fare zones, is one of the best available. It's convenient and suits the way Melbourne's commuters travel - by changing from one service to another as often as necessary.

There are of course anomalies in the system - for instance, from Camberwell it costs more to travel to Box Hill, just 5km away, than to Laverton on the other side of the city. But this will be a problem to some degree in any multi-zone system, so there isn't much point changing boundaries unless there is some serious benefit available.

Free public transport, while initially attractive due to removing the need for the costs of a ticketing system (and ticket inspectors) and increasing patronage (with the associated environmental and social benefits of increased public transport use), is not a good idea for the following reasons:

- It reinforces the idea, which is already widespread in Melbourne, that public transport is the poor people's option - only for people who can't afford to run a car. We want it to be seen as the responsible people's option - for people who don't want to contribute to congestion and pollution.
- It will probably not bring the expected significant modal shift away from car usage. Public transport is already significantly cheaper than car ownership and running costs, but its market share remains relatively low. Also, among people who are already entitled to free public transport (eg public transport employees), many still use a car. These factors indicate that price is not the only factor influencing people's decisions on travel mode - for example availability (does it run where and when I'm travelling?) and convenience (will it take me half an hour less if I use the car?) are more likely to be considered.
- The loss of fare revenue would require a significant increase in operating subsidy (up to \$50 million per year). This money would be better put to use improving the system.

Funding public transport improvements

In Australian society we believe that the people who receive the benefit of any measure should be the ones who pay for it. Who receives the benefit from improvements in public transport?

- Commuters will benefit. However, fare revenue could not generate enough money to pay for major investments to the system as ticket prices would be forbiddingly high.
- The environment will benefit. Public transport causes a lot less pollution per passenger-kilometer than private cars, especially when you include the secondary effects of driving (eg transporting the fuel from the refinery to the petrol station). The environment doesn't have money of its own, but all levels of government have programs to help build an environmentally sustainable society. Public transport investment is a valid use of that money.
- Motorists will benefit. Roads will be less congested because more people will take public transport, so a small tax on petrol is justifiable. This will also act as a deterrent tax, to alert people to the environmental consequences of driving.
- The people of the future will benefit - lack of investment now would lead to gridlocks which would cost Melbourne dearly over the next few decades. Therefore it's right for the governments to borrow money to build infrastructure, because then the next generation, which will be reaping the benefits, will also pay the bills (via their taxes).

Federal funding

Some people have called for the Federal government to contribute to the funding of public transport. Smart Passengers sees this as potentially very beneficial, but also potentially dangerous. Unless strict guidelines are made as to which level of government is responsible for which improvements, they could both end up investing very little and hoping the other would do it instead.

We might (for instance) continue to have the state government responsible for operating costs plus all improvements to existing infrastructure, and bring in Federal money for the construction of new lines (such as to Doncaster and Rowville).

According to the Australian Constitution, the Federal government has the responsibility - up to the point of being able to override state government decisions - over certain specific areas including environmental matters. The provision of a high capacity public transport corridor into a highly populated area of Melbourne which is currently served only very poorly is a prime candidate for this responsibility to be exercised.

The full list of Smart Passengers policies is available online at www.smartpassengers.org.au/policies.html

Major improvements like the Clifton Hill Rail Project could be Federally funded

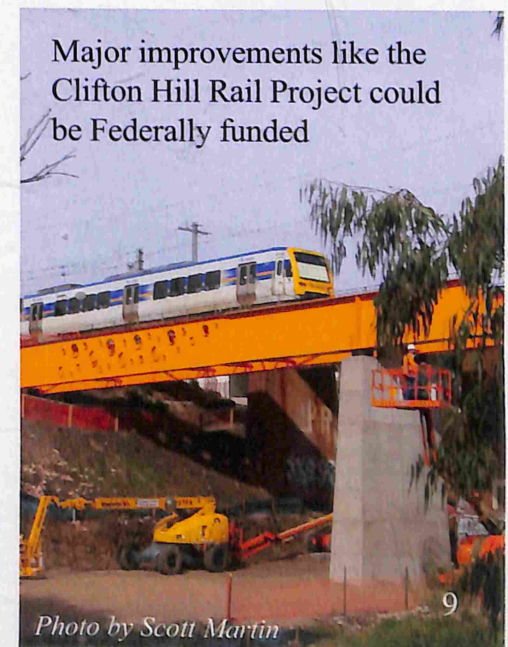
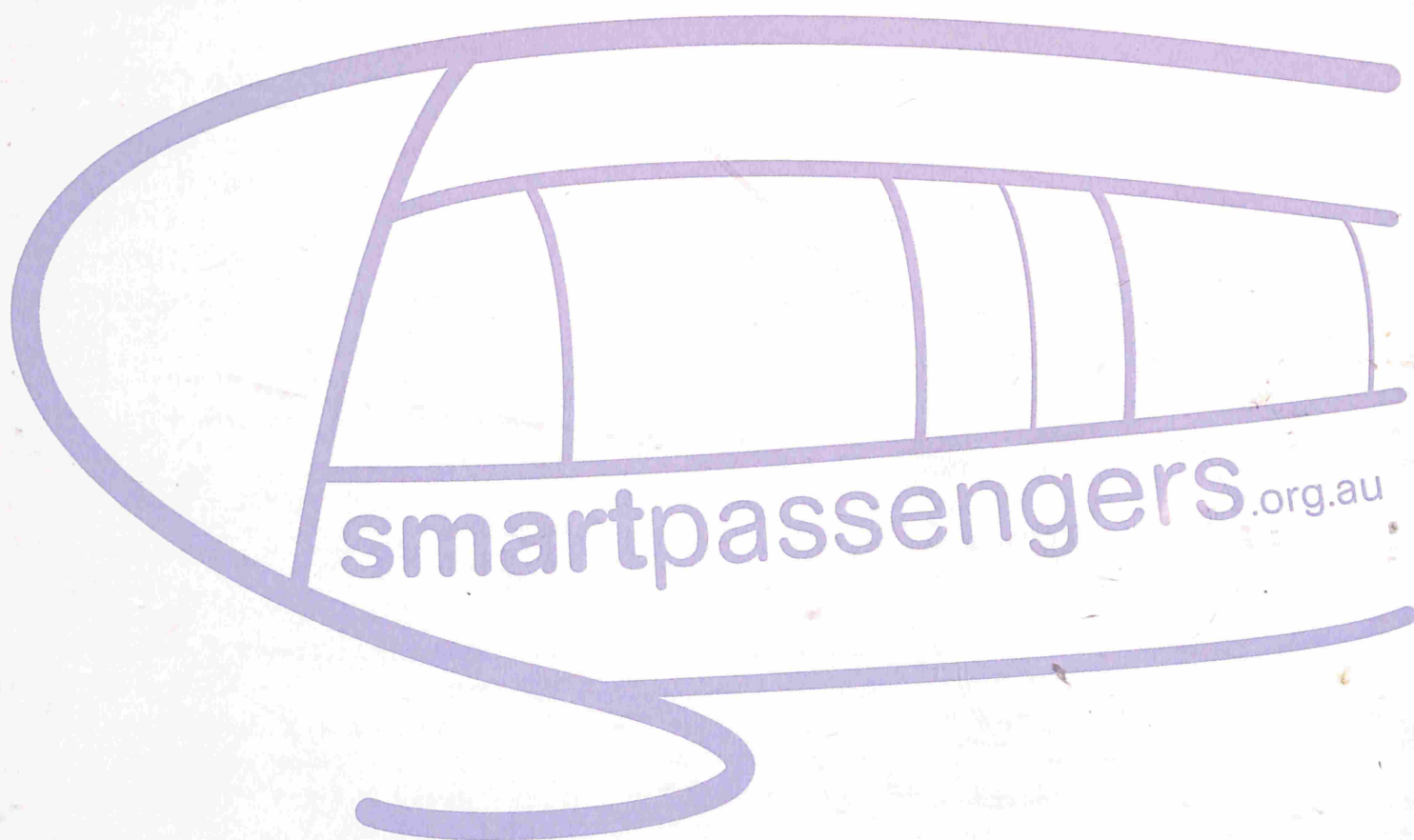


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