

Chapter 12

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Public Transport and the Road Problem

Every working day in Melbourne hundreds of thousands of people have to travel from one part of the metropolitan area to the other. Most of these are workers travelling between their homes and places of work, while others travel on business or for shopping. On holidays many thousands travel to recreational and holiday centres both within and outside the metropolitan area. Many of these people travel by private motor vehicles, but by far the greatest number make use of one or other of the public transport services.

The term public transport as here used is not restricted to publicly-owned services, but embraces all public and private enterprises which provide an organised service to the public for the movement of people and goods.

While the private motor car is a great convenience and often saves much time, it is a most inefficient way of moving large numbers of people. In proportion to the number of people it carries, a private motor car takes up far more space than do public transport vehicles. Therefore, the greater reliance that is placed on private motor cars the more costly will be the road communication system, and the more difficult the problem of accommodating the stationary motor vehicle.

The effect that public transport has on travelling habits is revealed by a comparison of the percentage of central area and suburban wage-earners who travel to work by private car. The survey showed that whereas about 12½% of central area workers travel to work by this means, more than 20% of suburban workers use cars. While this is contributed to by several factors, undoubtedly the principal reason for the difference is the better means of public transport available for travel into the city area. This emphasises the influence which a good public transport service can have on the traffic problem. The more people that can be induced to use public transport, particularly railways, in preference to private motor cars, the fewer will be the vehicles on the roads and the less acute the traffic problem.

It is not suggested that even the best public transport system will eliminate the road traffic problem, but to the extent that it offers convenient, comfortable and rapid means of travel so will it assist the greater problem of road communication. The two are complementary.

No form of transport whether road, rail, tramway or airway should be considered in isolation. Each must be considered from the viewpoint of the overall community interest as part of the wider problem of transport in general. For example, a tramway extension along a particular route might be eminently desirable from the viewpoint of tramway operation, but if it would interfere with the free movement of traffic on a busy road the overall loss to the community could be much greater than the gain to the tramways. A study of the overall economics might show that another form of transport or another route, while still providing an adequate service, would also be in the community interest.

The movement of people is not the only function of the public transport system. The movement of goods is equally important and the two are intimately woven into the organisation of the railways, shipping and airways services. Long distance road transport, although mostly privately owned, provides a parallel public service.

As pointed out in the preceding chapter, transport absorbs a very high percentage of the State income, and any costs incurred unnecessarily will be reflected in a higher cost of living. Thus, in the interests of the community, there is urgent need for a co-ordinated approach to the whole question of the movement of people and goods to eliminate duplication of services and uneconomic competition, and to ensure that essential movements are carried out as efficiently and economically as possible.

The problem of co-ordination is both a serious and vital one and involves consideration of the best way in which effective co-ordination might be achieved. It is not the task of this report to go into this question in detail, but it may well be that a co-ordinating authority will have to be formed and that it will have to be armed with sufficient powers to enable it to guide the overall development of all forms of transport in the city.

What form the authority might take would have to be carefully considered, but it should not be beyond the imagination of the appropriate authorities to devise suitable and adequate machinery. That there is need to give new consideration to the problem can hardly be questioned. The present problems of Melbourne cannot be solved in a piecemeal fashion no matter however well-intended piecemeal solutions might be.

Public Transport within the Metropolitan Area

Within the metropolitan area the greatest public transport problem is the movement of workers. Not only do they constitute the greatest number of travellers, but they mostly travel within a limited period in the morning and the evening, resulting in peak conditions which put a severe strain on the transport system. Travel for other purposes, such as shopping and amusement, is much less in volume and is generally better distributed. Therefore a public transport system which will adequately cater for movements to and from work will meet all other normal demands on it.

Some idea of the future problem associated with the transport of workers may be obtained by a study of diagram 30 which, for the ten zones that formed the basis of sampling for the statistical survey, show:

- (a) The number of workers who lived in each zone in 1951 and the estimated number who will live there when the population reaches 2,500,000.
- (b) The number of workers who were employed in each zone in 1951 and the estimated number who will work there when the population reaches 2,500,000.
- (c) The number of workers who travelled between zones in 1951 and the estimated number who will travel between zones when the population reaches 2,500,000.

A comparison between the present and estimated future numbers of workers who will travel between the zones gives a picture of the relationship between the present and future problems of worker transport. To solve this problem, the forms of public transport available in the metropolitan area are railways, tramways and buses both publicly and privately owned. Except in a few instances, the privately-owned buses serve as feeders to the publicly-owned trams and trains, but buses operated by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board are mostly used on routes which radiate from the central business area.

Map 31 shows the portions of the present urban area in which travel by tram and train (including in each case feeder services) are respectively the fastest form of public transport to the city centre. Of the 159,000 central area workers who have to travel to work from the suburbs, 55% live in the railway catchment area and 45% in the tramway and bus catchment area. The suburban railway lines are generally the first sections of country lines, and although they were constructed primarily to serve country districts, the fact that they all run direct to the city has had a material influence on the urban development of Melbourne. Before the advent of the motor car, proximity to a railway line was a great convenience and sometimes a necessity. So, in the earlier years of the city's history, development tended to follow the main railways. In more recent years the extensions of the electric tramways system, the flexibility of buses, and the increasing use of private motor vehicles have made suburban development less dependent on the railway. Housing has tended to fill in the intervening spaces between railway lines bringing about a somewhat more compact urban growth.

With the better distribution of central area passengers when the city underground railway is constructed a journey of approximately three miles will be as convenient by either tram or train for the city worker who lives equidistant from these two services. As most of the area within this distance and some miles beyond is already fully developed, it follows that no substantial increase in the catchment areas of tram and bus routes to the city centre can be expected.

Map 32 shows the probably railway and tramway catchments for the future urban area as determined by this planning scheme. When the population reaches 2,500,000, the central area workers will number 250,000 or more, according to the effectiveness of the policy of decentralisation. It is estimated that about 75% of these workers will live in areas best served by the railway system, thus emphasising the future importance of this form of public transport.

On the other hand, the railways are becoming less important in moving goods and materials from place to place within the metropolitan area because of the greater convenience of road transport. Suburban railway sidings, which at one time were so essential, are now used much less extensively, so that existing reservations are more than sufficient.

Except for some minor traffic on the lower reaches of the Yarra, water transport makes no contribution to the public transport system of the city.

Movement beyond Metropolitan Boundaries

In addition to means for moving people and goods from place to place within its boundaries, a city must provide terminal and other facilities for transport to places beyond its boundaries. Terminal facilities for passengers and goods carried by railways, shipping, aircraft, road passenger and road freight vehicles are all necessary.

The location of these terminals in relation to the metropolitan public transport and road systems is important, because not only do they attract traffic from all over the city and are therefore potential centres of congestion, but the people who use them must be able to get to these terminals as expeditiously and with as little inconvenience as possible. Each has its own particular requirements, but all have the common need of space for the circulation of people and vehicles. Where large terminals, such as central railway stations, have already been established the great capital investment which has been incurred virtually precludes their re-location except in extreme circumstances. Generally it will be more economical to either provide alternative facilities or to modify other development to alleviate or remedy any objectionable features which may have arisen. Where, however, new terminals are necessary, their location must be carefully considered to ensure that undesirable conditions are not created.

TRAMWAYS AND MOTOR BUSES

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board owns and operates an efficient tram and bus service to nearly every