



Response to Melbourne 2030:
Integrated Transport Draft Implementation Plan
28 February 2003

Save our Suburbs Inc
PO Box 5042Y
Melbourne 3001

Phone 9818 4576
Fax 9815 2122

email: sosmelbourne@sos.org.au

SOS supports the thrust of the Integrated Transport Draft Implementation Plan, but we are very concerned that no substance has been provided to give any assurance that any of the Plan is likely to be implemented.

Achieving the 2020 goal, modest though it may be in European terms, will require major changes in the behaviour and lifestyle of Melbournians. However, the Plan does not address ways in which behaviour modification would be attempted.

The natural ageing of the population is another demographic factor that does not seem to have been taken into account in terms of the nexus between an upgraded public transport regime and the behaviour and life-styles of the city's residents.

The aim of increasing public transport use by increasing population densities in and near suburban activity centres will ensure that parking at these centres will become more expensive and competitive. Understandably, there are no plans or provision of funding for extra parking space near train stations close to activity centres, which would only turn parts of these centres into giant car parks.

There is also no mention of park-and-ride facilities that would be necessary at more suitable locations to reduce peak commuter traffic to and from the city.

The recent Sunday Age survey of residents' opinions (16 Feb 2003) on Melbourne's railway stations highlights the "user-friendly" aspects of rail patronage that are lacking and without which no upgrade of public transport can succeed - staffing of all stations is the main ingredient missing and would have obvious flow-on benefits that may not translate into direct dollars for the operator but which will attract more customers. Those benefits include minimising vandalism and other anti-social behaviour.

It seems that because of the private transport lobby, consecutive Victorian State Governments have not seen fit to heed the first basic lesson of public transport provision; that the horse must come before the cart - an efficient, cheap, safe, clean punctual service must be provided first if usage rates are to increase significantly. As evidenced in most European countries, where such a service is provided patronage is very high (compared to our current usage rates).

This will necessarily involve a substantial investment.

The Plan aims to dramatically improve and extend bus services, but no specifics are presented, particularly with respect to how this will be achieved with the presently privatised public transport network.

Making these services attractive will require a significant increase in the frequency, punctuality and quality of service (partly achievable in the inner city by "bus/tram only" lanes). This implies using mass transit systems for longer distance routes (ie trams or preferably trains) to avoid traffic delays.

The Government has mandated little proper integration of present services and, again, no evidence is presented in M2030 that gives any cause to believe that this will occur to a significant extent in the foreseeable future.

Specific features of an integrated PT plan should include local loop bus services, a greater increase in the coverage and frequency of cross-link services and reinstatement of the old inner- and outer circle mass transit rail lines.

A large properly integrated Public Transport such as that suggested above would not be viable for private enterprise because of the high ticket prices that would have to be charged to establish and operate these quality services to generate a profit. The Government should have therefore given thought to de-privatisation and even the provision of free public transport.

At the very least, a full independent feasibility study should be done of a "free" PT system (ie, no tickets) using triple-bottom-line accounting and including the benefits of all externalities such as less pollution, fewer traffic accidents, less traffic congestion, lower fossil fuel consumption, and a better quality of life. Such an approach would also free up existing station offices to be let as premises for 24-hr service outlets like internet cafes, restaurants, shoe & bicycle repair shops, etc - again, facilitating services to the public.

If the State Government were to make a strong commitment to upgrade and promote Melbourne's public transport system, we could achieve similar results to Perth's fully integrated South West Metropolitan Railway system, which will effectively double Perth's existing rail network in only five years, and will be fed by a system of local bus routes. Perth is also collaborating in Australia's first trial project of non-polluting fuel cell buses.

SUMMARY

SOS suggests that instead of the un-substantiated "20-20-20" target, the goals for the IPTIP could be that by 2020:

- Every resident of metro-Melbourne within the urban growth boundaries of the city will be able to access one or more forms of public transport in a socially-equitable fashion on foot (ie, within a maximum of 400m)
- an improved integrated public transport system will have reduced arterial road traffic to levels that are acceptable to local communities and municipal authorities
- on average, Melbourne households will only own one car
- carbon fuel consumption in Victoria will have been reduced in keeping with our national Kyoto obligations