

Action for Public Transport (N.S.W.)

PO Box K606 Haymarket NSW 2000

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SUBURBAN TRAIN DESIGN -
SRA FINALLY CLOSING THE GAP.

APT is naturally pleased to learn that a new generation of suburban 'Tangara' trains are to be built for Sydney. Whilst applauding the SRA and the Government for the new trains, APT asks that the SRA refrain from claiming the new trains will "...give Sydney commuters 21st century train travel years ahead of time". (Sun-Herald quoting SRA brochure, 9.12.84)

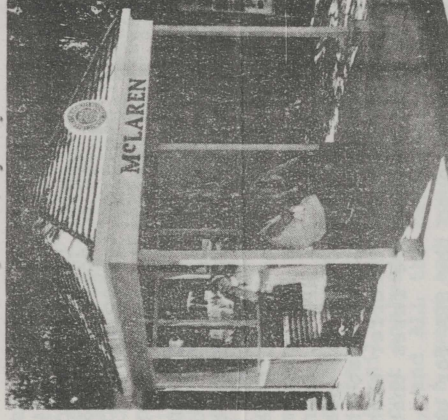
If the initial publicity is correct, the Tangara vehicles will be light years ahead of CURRENT Sydney suburban trains but the SRA's Chief Mechanical Engineer, Mr. John Brew, and his senior staff, know full well that the latest suburban trains ALREADY IN SERVICE in ALL other states (electrics in Brisbane and Melbourne, and diesel railcars in Adelaide and Perth) already have most of the engineering and comfort features which the Tangaras will have when we get them. Indeed, Brisbane's electric trains, which commenced running in November, 1979, have; air-conditioning, wall-to-wall carpets, fabric covered seats, chopper (electronic) control, destination indicators, multi-function couplers, public address systems (they are used, and they work!), two-way radio, enclosed gangways between cars, semi-automatic inter-car doors, and the capacity to close off individual carriages for security purposes.

Apart from one prototype model, none of Sydney's present suburban fleet has ANY of these features.

The above list reads remarkably like that in the initial publicity for the Tangara trains and should serve as a reminder that the SRA's Mechanical Branch is catching up with the rest of the world, rather than leading it, as the SRA might have us believe.

MORE ON ASSISTANCE FOR PASSENGERS

Further to our October item on 'Ansacare', the needs of the disabled, elderly, tired, sick, or lost rail passengers are looked after at Sydney Terminal by the Travellers' Aid Society. The society is a charitable body and provides free, a quiet rest area. It will meet passengers and arrange medical assistance if required. Showers are available at a nominal cost. Phone 211 2469 for more information.



Bus shelter...
North Sydney.

"THEY ALSO SERVE WHO ONLY STAND AND WAIT"

Few public buildings exhibit so great a variety of designs for so simple or solitary a purpose as does the humble bus waiting shed. It has been with us for so long that one might assume that it has evolved to some kind of ultimate state of maximum functionality at minimum cost. Not so!

After providing weather protection, one of the most important features of a bus shelter would be that it not obstruct the intending passenger's view of an approaching bus. In a very high proportion of existing shelters, this criterion is not met.

It is with some pleasure then, not to say excitement, that we compliment North Sydney Council on its new bus shelters. Not only are they functional, in that a person seated in the shelter can see an approaching bus, but they have bus route map displays and the name of the adjacent side street emblazoned on the shelter wall. This means of identifying the bus stop must be a boon to bus drivers and passengers alike, when discussing destinations and fares.

This commendable example of civic design reinforces our long-time affinity with the utterances and deeds of Mayor Ted Mack. Our only suggestion in this case is that the street name should always appear on the 'approach' side of the shelter, so that bus passengers who may be visiting the area for the first time would be able to identify their stop by looking out of the front of the bus. APT has prepared a 'performance specification' for bus shelters, and is promoting it to local government authorities.

SUCCESSFUL CONSUMERISM.

Last issue we mentioned the need for perseverance in transport consumerism. How's this..... Residents in the West Lane Cove area are lobbying for a better bus connection across the Lane Cove River to Sydney's western suburbs. They've been campaigning since 1949 !!!!!

George Orwell's predictions for 1984 were, in most cases, wide of the mark. However, his forecast that the 1980's would be an era of bureaucratic 'newspeak' was indeed correct if we examine a few of the utterances from the NSW transport bureaucrats during 1984.

The title, 'newspeak of 1984', must go to the SRA's denial (Sun-Herald, 29.7.84) that the XPT was always intended to be a two class, two fare train (first and economy) until a last minute political decision turned it into a one-class, expensive fare train.

Most students of NSW transport know that the SRA's own carriage coding, 'B' for first class, 'F' for economy, indicates that the XPT's were originally built for two classes of seating. Full marks to the Sun-Herald's Gavin Gilchrist who, after having one SRA spokesman deny the two-class concept for XPT's, found two other sources who confirmed the two-class coding, supporting the contention that the trains were, originally designed to offer economy fares, not the elitist, expensive fares that we have today.

Other awards go to the SRA for using the word 'adjustments' (to services) when they mean 'cuts' or 'cancellations', and to the Federal Government for describing the Inquiry into the Alice Springs - Darwin railway as 'independent', when it was carried out by the SRA's David Hill, a close political friend of the Premier, and in turn the Prime Minister, who had made it clear that he didn't favour the railway.

PROMOTING 'DAY ROVERS'

We commend the SRA for running a full page ad. in the Sunday Telegraph of 13/1 to publicise the Day Rover ticket and other concession fares. It is interesting to note that the SRA's companion, the UTA, has consistently failed to promote the Day Rover on the grounds that its sales are too small to warrant publicity!

The UTA has also refused to allow the ticket to be sold on buses or from its weekend street-stalls, the standard response being that these tickets can be obtained from railway stations and - wait for it - from bus depots!

Those potential bus passengers who can actually walk past a depot on their way to the bus stop might then be surprised to find that the ticket counter is only staffed at irregular hours.

BOUQUET DEPARTMENT

Full marks to the State Rail Authority and Urban Transit Authority for placing newspaper advertisements to publicise their late night train and bus services during the festive season. Of course, the fact that each authority ran separate adverts highlights just how far Sydney's public transport administrators have to go to catch up with their peers in other big cities, like London, in the field of coordinated publicity and passenger information. More encouraging is the news that this city of 3 million people should get a new edition of its long-out-of-date public transport map sometime in 1985.

APT ELECTION RESULTS, NOV. '84.

Convenor; Robert Mills
Secretary; Bob McNairn
Treasurer; Allan Miles
Management Committee; Paul Gilchrist, Bob Carey, Kevin Eadie, George Oubridge.

MEETINGS

APT meets every Tuesday at 5.30 pm in the Library, NSW Environment Centre, 399 Pitt St. Sydney, (near Liverpool St.)

Visitors are welcome..donations, too, or simply send \$10 for membership to September 1985.

CUTS TO LONG DISTANCE TRAINS

The State Government is considering cutting out all intrastate overnight passenger trains except those serving the North Coast.

There can be little doubt that long distance passenger trains will almost disappear in the near future, to be replaced by buses. The Minister for Transport favours it- the powerful Transport Workers' (bus drivers) Union would like it and the rail unions, who would seem to have most to lose, are fiddling like Nero in loco cabins while the Rome of the rail network disintegrates around them.

Three recent inquiries will have a bearing on

the future of these trains; the House of Reps. Standing Committee on Road Safety is looking at coach safety, the Russell inquiry looked at the NSW bus industry, and a review of state airlines is due for completion by July '85.

Consumer preference is probably evenly divided between buses and trains but the public deserves a say in other important matters before country travel is handed to the private bus industry "on a plate". They include safety and comfort. Given the road toll of over 1000 a year in NSW is it reasonable to ask train travellers to risk their lives by having to share the roads with unprofessional, if not incompetent, drivers? So far as comfort is concerned, there are not many buses around offering sleeping berths, civilised dining facilities, or effective non-smoking accommodation.

YES BARRIE, A.P.T. IS A 'FRONT'!

APT is occasionally accused of being a 'front' for some other organisation. It has recently come to our notice that Transport Minister, Barrie Unsworth, has such feelings.

Anyone who has taken the trouble to read our media releases and submissions, listen to our radio or TV interviews, or even tap our phones over the last ten years, would realise that we certainly are a 'front'....for public transport customers!

On various occasions we have praised or criticised governments, opposition parties, transport operators, and unions, but we have no vested interest in any of them. Our only bias is toward the public transport customer and our only affiliations are with other consumer groups. If Mr. Unsworth is in any doubt about our credentials he should re-read all our media releases, attend our regular weekly meetings, or talk to former Minister Cox, who was much more sympathetic toward public transport than is apparent in Mr. Unsworth.

SWISS MOVES.

The Swiss Government has recently moved to make its rail services more attractive. Taxes have been imposed on heavy road vehicles and vehicles using motorways, maximum road speeds have been reduced, and a proposed 3% increase in rail charges has been forgone. The moves are seen as conservative measures to reduce road traffic, exhaust pollution and acid rain. APT is encouraged that at least one country understands the community benefits of increasing the direct funding of railways, particularly at the expense of competing transport modes which have a greater environmental impact, so that fares and charges remain attractive to users.

FREEMWAY UPDATE.

APT AND ROAD SAFETY

APT attended the Federal Government's National Road Safety Symposium in Canberra in November, organised by the Department of Transport's Office of Road Safety. It was attended by more than 200 delegates, mainly from the road and transport industries and government.

APT told the gathering that improving roads to reduce the road toll ignored Australian Road Research Board figures which showed that THE DRIVER was responsible for 80% of so called 'accidents'. In these circumstances, money spent on road improvements was becoming increasingly wasteful, and many road works actually increased the danger to pedestrians.

APT said Random Breath Testing had shown that it was possible to change driver attitudes, hitherto considered too difficult. We said that road safety funds should in future be diverted into modifying driver behavior, and away from expensive road-construction solutions which forgave driver error and penalised other road users or the wider community.

APT recommended:

- Lower speed limits and pedestrian priority in residential streets,
- Better driver training,
- Discouragement of skylarking by young drivers,
- Clear pedestrian rights at roundabouts,
- Provision of low-cost cyclist routes BEFORE cyclists were banned from footpaths and other public places, and
- Guardrails to protect pedestrians whenever kerbside poles were removed.

"THE RAIL WAY IS THE SAFE WAY", OR WAS.....

Are the SRA's safety procedures effective in stopping drunks from driving trains?

Callers to a Sydney radio station (2GB 9.12.84) doubted it. A former hotelier said she knew of individual train drivers who were often drunk on their way to work, and a former railway clerk said the safety procedures which in theory prevented a drunk taking charge of a train were impractical. He said there was a strong incentive for supervisors ~~not~~ to report drunk drivers because of the additional work it created for the supervisor. This could include report writing and the calling of the police, an act which would be seen as destroying comradeship and which might result in the supervisor being ostracized.

The driver killed in last year's Cowan collision was found to have a high blood-alcohol level. What is the present position?

How safe is the railway?
We ask it here knowing that if we addressed the question to the SRA we would get the usual fob-off. The SRA has a drug counselling scheme, but that is not the answer.

P.T. A "VACCINE" FOR THE ROAD TOLL

A Californian pediatrician has advocated public transport as part of the solution to 'the pathogen we call the automobile', the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged one to 24.

'A wall of blind indifference prevents the development of a superior public transit system that could provide a life-saving escape route, reducing fatalities and injuries more than 50% within one year', says a Beverly Hills G.P. He said that buses on roads are 250 times safer than cars; trains are 72 times safer than cars; domestic airlines are 33 times safer than cars and local transit is 5200 times safer than cars.

Americans suffer 22 million auto crashes annually, killing 52600, injuring 4 million, and permanently crippling 500,000. ('Pas. Tpt'7/84)

The proposed Eastern Distributor Expressway is yet another example of treating the symptom rather than the cause. The major South Sydney employment area suffers from poor access by public transport as it is not served by the rail system. Workers therefore prefer to drive, putting more pressure on the roads leading to and around the city. Building the Distributor will just encourage more workers to drive.

The community benefits of rail access to the Southern Suburbs would be more widespread than those from the Distributor, because traffic on main roads leading to the city from the north and west would actually be reduced as motorists became train passengers. A railway would also benefit existing public transport users to and from the Southern Suburbs. However, the DMR consultants have effectively excluded these benefits from their localised terms of reference, ensuring that a road solution will be chosen.

It is essential that this sort of bias against better public transport is eliminated. This will only happen if rail proposals are subject to the same benefit/cost analysis process used by the DMR for roads, and ALL the benefits, to both public transport users and road users, are considered.

The consultants are presently considering the public reaction to the recent exhibition of options for the Distributor, but the prospect of improved public transport to south-eastern Sydney is not good.

HANDY HINTS DEPARTMENT

1. Speeding up your Melbourne-Sydney trip. If you are travelling by train from Melbourne to Sydney and wish to leave Melbourne after normal work hours and arrive before the working day begins in Sydney, there is a faster alternative to the Southern Aurora and Spirit of Progress trains. Just catch V/line's 5.20 pm Monday to Friday intercity train from Melbourne and arrive Albury at 9.15 pm - change trains and depart Albury at 9.30 pm on the South XPT, arriving Sydney at 5.30 am. Total travel time - 12 hours 10 minutes. This compares with 13 hours on the Aurora, 14 on the Spirit, and 13 on the fastest coach. There are two catches - no equivalent southbound service, (the South XPT arriving Albury after the morning Melbourne train has departed,) and the high XPT fares. The economy Melbourne-Albury fare, \$19.95, plus the Albury-Sydney XPT fare, \$53.80, totals \$73.75. The economy fare on the Spirit is \$56.00, while Greyhound's "5 Star" coach costs \$39.00, and VIP's coach is \$25.00.

2. How to travel to Mudgee and Dubbo in daylight even when there's no XPT. Apart from being expensive, XPTs are occasionally cancelled because of industrial disputes. This can be a real problem for people in Western areas of NSW because the Central West XPT is their only morning rail service from Sydney. However there IS a way to reach at least Mudgee and Dubbo when there's no XPT. Just catch the 6.45 am Mondays-to-Fridays Sydney to Lithgow train (7.10 Sats.) arriving Lithgow 9.41 am (9.58 Sats.) and join the Mudgee train departing Lithgow at 10.35, which arrives Mudgee at 1.00. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays our 'Strike-breaking' traveller can continue to Dubbo via Coonabarabran by joining the SRA coach which leaves Mudgee station at 1.45 pm and reaches Dubbo at 7.30 pm.

The reverse journey is also possible. One has to arise a little earlier to use these services but if you don't want to wait for the evening Mudgee train or Dubbo Mail train, this is a reasonable alternative. The views over the Capertee Valley and of the Warrumbungles are better than those on the direct XPT service too.

INTERSTATE NEWS

Members of a Melbourne commuter group now get discounts on their fares. The Public Transport Users' Association (formerly Train Travellers' Ass.) has an arrangement with the MTA to sell yearly and half-yearly all-modes tickets to its members at discounts of 10% to 15%.

The northern loop, the fourth and last track in the Melbourne underground, was brought into service on 7 January.

The Queensland Government has approved the building of a high speed (160 km/h) rail link between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, using electric trains on a dual-gauged section of the interstate line between South Brisbane and Yeerongpilly. The former Gold Coast railway was opened in 1889 and closed amid public outcry in 1964.

On the eve of the Victorian election, Premier Cain has 'done a Wran' by promising XPT trains to Melbourne by June. V-line is actually accepting bookings - but when APT asked for information about fares on the XPT we were told 'they haven't been announced'.

This could be interpreted as 'they will change'. No prizes for guessing that the economy fare scale will disappear! Wake up Victoria!

SMOKING ON 'PRIVATE' BUSES

The Urban Transit Authority has agreed to have 'no-smoking' signs displayed in all privately owned buses on 'route' services. Smoking has in fact been prohibited for many years, but the lack of adequate signs has meant that abuse was widespread and enforcement was difficult. Complaints on this subject should be phoned to the Department of Motor Transport (public vehicles section). Be prepared for some buck-passing, but persist!

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

Prepared a submission on the redevelopment of Darling Harbour...Co-ordinated and promoted charter bus services during the latest of many train drivers' strikes....issued press releases on Tangara trains, improved safety for pedestrians, and the exorbitant XPT fares.

LATE NEWS.....LATE NEWS.....LATE NEWS.....LATE NEWS....

ROWDY BEHAVIOR ON TRAINS

The Commuter Council has advised that it is the responsibility of the guard or conductor to maintain public order on trains. If you have problems of this nature, quietly visit the guard, who can usually restore order or, if he thinks it necessary, can phone or radio ahead for assistance.

WHAT'S ON.....

Conference, 'Electrification- Railways to the year 2000'. Brisbane, June 17 - 19. Inst. of Engineers

Conference, 'Transport Policy and Economics'. Sydney, July 17 -19. Inst. of Eng'rs.

Study tour on railway engineering, to USA, Sept. 8 - Oct. 11, Inst. of Eng'rs.062-733633

Tour, Hong Kong to London, departs June 21. Ass. of Railway Enthusiasts, Box 187, Croydon, Vic. 3136.

Forum, 'Public T'port in Western Sydney'. Bus services, Community T'port, Strategies. Westmead Hospital, March 16. Sponsored by West. Sydney Community Forum, (02)621 7423.

Seminar; 'Country Public Transport', Railway Institute, Sydney. March 9. Commuter Council, (02) 290 4724.

Leichhardt Community Transport Group. Inaugural meeting, 6 pm, March 6 608 Darling St, Rozelle.
Ms. Healy, (02) 560 4100 xtn 300

Conference, on 'integration, co-ordination, and fragmentation' of public transport, but the word 'train' only appears once on the promo brochure, and then in the context of a 'steam train excursion'. A self-indulgent romp by the bus industry, at \$225 a pop. There's an 'official' airline but no busline! A labour transport minister and a liberal shadow minister will speak from the same platform. It might just be worth 225 bucks! (02) 630 8655.

Regent Hotel, Sydney. March3-7, 1985.