A SUBMISSION BY THE FRIENDS OF BANYULE TO THE BANYULE/ DAREBIN/ MORELAND BUS SERVICE REVIEW

The Friends of Banyule welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Banyule/ Darebin/ Moreland Bus Service Review by the Victorian Department of Transport.

The Friends of Banyule is a local community group which is dedicated to the protection of the Banyule Flats, Warringal Parklands, Yarra Flats, Bolin Bolin Billabong and other significant green wedge areas now and for future generations of Melburnians.

Friends of Banyule oppose the proposal by the Victorian government to build a "North-East Link" freeway, estimated to cost in excess of $6 billion. This is a fundamental threat to our green space and would further embed car dependency in Melbourne. The Friends of Banyule strongly advocate the expansion of public transport, cycling and walking as essential means of transport to maintain the integrity of the natural and built environment in the City of Banyule.

There is substantial scope to reform transport in Banyule and a key outcome of this review should be the development of a route bus system that makes a significant modal shift from the motorcar to public transport a viable option for all local residents. Bus services have for too long been regarded as the poor cousin in Melbourne's public transport system. It should be playing an increasingly important role as a people mover and not just as a second rate service offering for people who have no other choices. This review could make a significant contribution to this transition.

In this submission we will focus primarily upon route bus services for the residents of the City of Banyule, although in doing so we will also be addressing issues that affect the residents of Darebin and Moreland, as well as further afield.

We are aware that the review of bus services in northern Banyule and the Shire of Nillumbik which was published in September 2008 recommended a range of improvements to bus services in that area, and we will refer to elements of this review.

Importance of route bus services

Route bus services are an underdeveloped element of the transport system in Banyule. However, they can and should be an integral component of the public transport system both in the City of Banyule and in neighbouring municipalities.

Table 1, below, lists the 36 services being considered in this review. The table also shows the daily availability of service and the total number of passengers each bus carried in 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Table 1: Moreland, Banyule, Darebin Bus Review patronage 2006-08

Route number	Route	Daily [1] services	2006-07	2007-08	Annual increase (%)
246	Elsternwick-Clifton Hill-LaTrobe	Seven days	1,242,621	1,296,056	4.3
250	Port Melb-La Trobe Uni	Seven days	947,018	957,362	1.1
251	Garden City-Northland	Seven days	575,441	577,726	0.4
340	City-La Trobe Uni	Five days	227,466	226,489	(0.4)
350	City-La Trobe Uni	Six days	81,573	83,748	2.7
503	Essendon- East Brunswick	Six days	203,795	205,213	0.7
504	Moonee Ponds-Clifton Hill	Six days	109,993	117,776	7.1
506	Moonee Ponds-Westgarth Railway Station	Six days	308,604	312,127	1.1
508	Alphington-Moonee Ponds	Seven days	637,773	676,891	6.1
509	West Brunswick-Sydney Road	Six days	66,497	62,246	(6.4)
510	Essendon-Ivanhoe	Seven days	399,358	450,160	12.6
512	Strathmore-East Coburg	Six days	109,793	110,618	0.7
513	Eltham-Glenroy	Seven days	872,698	1,011,692	15.9
517	Northland-St. Helena	Seven days	290,372	297,196	2.4
525	Coburg-West Reservoir	Five days	4,448	4,228	(4.9)
526	Coburg-West Preston	Six days	106,153	111,158	4.7
527	Gowrie Railway Station - Northland	Seven days	729,761	816,857	11.9
530	Campbellfield-Coburg	Seven days	114,986	139,709	21.5
534	Merlynston-Glenroy	Seven days	144,996	118,763	(18.1)
546	Heidelberg-Melbourne	Five days	102,823	94,234	(8.4)

	University				
548	Kew-La Trobe Uni	Six days	375,390	375,238	(0.0)
549	Ivanhoe-Northland	Six days	125,668	124,931	(0.6)
550	Northland-La Trobe interchange	Six days	118,224	127,187	7.6
551	Heidelberg-La Trobe interchange	Five days	149,691	163,333	9.1
552	NE Reservoir-Northcote Plaza	Seven days	529,602	551,552	4.1
553	Preston-West Preston	Seven days	131,415	144,829	10.2
555	Epping Plaza-Northland	Seven days	334,023	370,775	11.0
556	Epping Plaza-Northland	Seven days	391,389	444,644	13.6
558	Reservoir-Reservoir	Five days	52,010	53,236	2.4
560	Greensborough-Broadmeadows	Six days	319,204	339,129	6.2
561	Reservoir-Macleod	Six days	145,539	172,444	18.5
563	Greensborough-Northland	Seven days	279,244	275,543	1.3
566	Lalor – Greensborough - Northland	Seven days	588,245	648,236	10.2
567	Northcote-Regent	Seven days	272,735	290,489	6.5
609	Kew –Royal Talbot -Fairfield	Five days	2851	2904	1.9
903 (SMARTBUS commenced April 2009)	Mordialloc-Altona station	Seven days	N/A	N/A	N/A
Aggregates			**11,091,399**	**11,726,168**	**5.7**

(1) The five day services shown in Table 1 are all Monday to Friday services and the six day services are all Monday to Saturday services

Sources: Route bus service ticket validations in 2006/07 and 2007/08, Department of Transport, and MetLink

As shown in Table 1 the aggregate increase in bus patronage in 2007/08 was just 5.7% which is relatively modest in comparison with the 8.1% increase in bus patronage for the whole of metropolitan Melbourne during this period. The growth in patronage on individual services between 2006/07 and 2007/08 in the review area was particularly variable, and ranged from a reduction of 18.1% to an increase of 18.5%.

It should be a central task of this review to address the relatively low overall growth rate and the major variability in patronage for individual services with a view to identifying initiatives that will substantially increase overall patronage.

It is regrettable that the Department of Transport has not made the patronage data for 2008/09 available publicly, as it would have provided a more contemporary picture of passenger trends. This includes the 903 SmartBus between Mordialloc and Altona, including Heidelberg and Northland, which was introduced during 2008/09. This service, which substituted for a number of pre-existing services, is understood to be enjoying strong passenger growth that should provide a guide for the improvement other services in Banyule and elsewhere.

Accessibility of bus services in the City of Banyule

The Victorian government has established a notional benchmark for 90% of Melbourne residents to be able to access regular transport services no further than 400 metres from where they live. However, manyBanyule residents are more than 400 metres from their nearest route bus service or a station on the Hurstbridge railway line, the other major public transport mode that operates in Banyule. Whilst this is especially true in the north of the City of Banyule, which was the major focus of the previous review, it is also the case in the area covered by this review.

For instance, it is evident that many residents of Viewbank, Yallambie and Greensborough must walk more than 400 metres to connect with the nearest bus service. This adversely affects the take-up of public transport in these suburbs. At a minimum this review should recommend services that bring residents within 400 metres of the nearest available service.

Service standards

In addition to making public transport accessible within 400 metres of 90% of residential dwellings in Melbourne, the Victorian government's *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* (May 2006) also prescribes minimum service standards of:

- Service availability between 6.00am and 9.00pm Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 9.00pm on Saturdays and 9.00am to 9.00pm on Sundays; and
- A minimum hourly headway.

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Table 2, below, lists the fifteen bus services which are subject to this review that also operate principally within the City of Banyule.

Table 2: Daily service frequency and service span, Banyule services

Route number	**Route**	**Daily [(1)] services**	**Frequency at lowest point (Mon-Fri)**	**Weekday service span**
510	Essendon-Ivanhoe	Seven days	50 minutes	5.55am-8.59pm
512	Strathmore-East Coburg	Six days	30 minutes	7.15am-6.15pm

513	Eltham-Glenroy	Seven days	Every twenty minutes	5.20 am-9.42 pm
517	Northland-St. Helena	Seven days	45 minutes	6.10 am-5.51 pm
527	Gowrie Railway Station - Northland	Seven days	40 minutes	6.00am-9.10pm
546	Heidelberg-Melbourne University	Five days	41 minutes	6.30am-6.00pm
548	Kew-La Trobe Uni	Six days	One hour	7.00am-7.35pm
549	Ivanhoe-Northland	Six days	42 minutes	7am-6.47pm
551	Heidelberg-La Trobe interchange	Five days	30 minutes	6.10am-7.30pm
560	Greensborough-Broadmeadows	Six days	40 minutes	6.00am-7.04pm
561	Reservoir-Macleod	Six days	50 minutes	6.45am-10.00pm
563	Greensborough-Northland	Seven days	31 minutes	6.00am-9.00pm
566	Lalor – Greensborough - Northland	Seven days	59 minutes	5.50am-9.23pm
609	Kew –Royal Talbot - Fairfield	Five days	3hours 45 minutes	8.00am-4.25pm
903 (SMARTBUS commenced April 2009)	Mordialloc-Altona station	Seven days	30 minutes	4.45am-12.00am

[1] The five day services are all Monday to Friday and the six day services are all Monday to Saturday.

Source: MetLink

As shown in the table not all services meet the weekday minimum service span between 6.00am and 9.00pm prescribed by the Victorian government. This service span is unlikely to be sufficient, even if it is met, especially for services operating between activity centres.

For the most part they meet the minimum hourly headway prescribed by the Victorian government. However, an hourly frequency of service is not satisfactory for any bus service. As it is not realistic to expect any significant “buy-in” to available bus services if the headway is greater than 30 minutes, this should be considered by the review as a minimum for neighbourhood services and 10-15 minutes the minimum for major services.

Seven day a week services

As shown in Table 1, only eighteen of all services covered by the review are available seven days a week, with the other eighteen being provided only Monday to Friday or Monday to Saturday. As shown in Table 2, of the eighteen services that operate principally within the City of Banyule, only seven operate seven days a week. This is highly unsatisfactory. They should all be seven day a week services.

We believe that increasing the availability of service across the whole week where only five-day or six-day services currently apply would significantly and positively affect modal travel behaviour. This is because it would provide a level of mobility that would decrease the cost of car dependency as households would be able to reduce the number of cars they have, and in some instances, be free to forego car use altogether. This will increasingly be the case if federal and state governments take the sensible initiative to introduce distance-dependent pricing and taxing regimes for road use.

Service connectivity

To provide for an acceptable level of connectivity between road-based bus and rail public transport services, buses have to run with reasonable frequency, be timed to minimise waiting time between services, and have a reasonable daily service span to provide for all users, including commuters, schools, day trippers and evening users.

And it is the bus services that are the weak link in the chain in Banyule as the Hurstbridge line does run with reasonable frequency, especially during peak hours Monday to Friday. As with other Melbourne rail services, overcrowding is an issue on the Hurstbridge line to be addressed outside this review.

As shown in Table 3, below, the highest number of bus services that link with train services in Banyule is at Greensborough railway station where ten bus services (the 293, 513, 517, 518, 520, 560, 562, 563, 566 and 569 services) connect with the Hurstbridge line rail service. This may be due more than anything to the historical non-availability of adequate rail services to the north and west of Greensborough.

As shown in Table 3 there are relatively few connecting bus services at railway stations elsewhere in Banyule, with four at Heidelberg railway station and three in Ivanhoe being the next best served railway stations. No buses serve Eaglemont railway station.

The two bus services that link with the train at Watsonia railway station, the 513 and the 566, require particular consideration because they collectively serve a major sweep of residential Banyule. The 513, which received attention in the Banyule/ Nillumbik Bus Service Review, provides a collector service to the south, north and east of the Watsonia railway station and the 566 provides a collector service to the north and west. Bus services from the south east and south west to Watsonia station are poor.

Poor connecting services in these directions is accentuated by the fact that only one bus connects at the next station south from Watsonia, Macleod, where the 561 bus services suburbs to the west of the Macleod railway station.

Table 3: Route bus and railway station connections in Banyule

Railway station	**Connecting bus services**	**Car parking**	**Bicycle facilities**
Darebin	546	36	11 racks, nil lockers, no cage
Stop ID: 19932			
Ivanhoe	510, 548, 549	311	4 racks, 14 lockers, no cage
Stop ID: 19933			
Eaglemont	Nil	Nil	5 racks, nil lockers, no cage
Stop ID: 19934			
Heidelberg	513, 546, 551, 903		5 racks, 16 lockers, no cage.
Stop ID: 19935			
Rosanna	513, 517	163	Nil racks, nil lockers, no cage
Stop 19936			
Macleod	561	105	5 racks, no lockers, no cage
Stop ID: 19983			
Watsonia	513, 566	468	5 racks, 4 lockers, no cage
Stop ID 19984			
Greensborough	293, 513, 517, 518, 520, 560, 562, 563, 566, 569	230	5 racks, 8 lockers, no cage
Stop ID: 19985			
Montmorency	293	98	Nil racks, nil lockers, no cage
Stop ID: 19986			
Total:		1411	

Source: MetLink

Multi-modal journeys to work in Banyule

According to the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, only 605 of the daily single mode journeys to work by residents of Banyule were made by bus, out of a total of 44,002 single mode journeys. i.e. 1.4% of all single mode journeys to work. 3,834 of all such journeys were made by train, which is only about 8.7% of the total journeys to work.

Most illuminating and concerning is the fact that only 337 people from Banyule took a bus and a train. In stark contrast, 37,375 (83%) of all single mode work journeys to work were made by car. There is much to be done here.

The Hurstbridge rail line potentially acts as a north-south public transport "spine" for the residents of Banyule. The line has great potential to provide linking services for bus patrons, and especially those who work in the CBD. However, the 337 residents of Banyule who travel to work by bus and train each day, as revealed by the 2006 Census, is a pathetically small number.

The Department of Transport has more recently surveyed passenger numbers on the Hurstbridge line who connect with local bus services. Unfortunately, this data has not been made available on request for utilisation in this submission. It should be publicly released and utilised in this review to throw more light on the issue of train and bus connectivity in the City of Banyule.

Cross-town bus services

The SmartBus concept was introduced in 2002 as high quality "cross-town" bus services to complement the radial train network. They are seven day a week higher frequency services that run up to 17 hours a day on weekdays and with lesser service spans on weekends. They are assisted by road priority treatments and smart technology, including for on-time running and stop information for patrons.

As noted earlier the 903 SmartBus which was introduced in 2008/09 is reportedly experiencing strong patronage growth. It plays a significant role in the review area as a major trunk service that links Heidelberg railway station, Northland, Preston railway station and Coburg railway station.

The 901 Yellow SmartBus service which currently operates between Frankston railway station and Ringwood railway station is scheduled for extension to Melbourne Airport via Blackburn, Greensborough, South Morang and Roxburgh Park.

Also, the 889 SmartBus that currently runs between Chelsea railway station and Nunawading railway station is due to be extended in 2010 to Airport West via Doncaster, Eltham, Greensborough and Broadmeadows. It is to be known as Orbital 902.

These services will provide desperately needed additional capacity and higher quality service in northern Banyule. However, more needs to be done. For instance, the 246 which operates between Elsternwick railway station and La Trobe University requires substantial upgrading. The route includes Hoddle Street, Oriel Road and Waterdale

Road. If it was upgraded to SmartBus status it would attract considerably more patrons and play a much more significant role in reducing north-south road congestion, including in Hoddle Street and Punt Road.

There are only two cross-Yarra bus services between Fitzimmons Lane in Lower Plenty and Clifton Hill that are of any consequence, the 903 orbital SmartBus that travels through Heidelberg on Manningham Road and Bell Street and the 548 service that travels from Kew to LaTrobe University via Burke Road and Ivanhoe railway station. The possible extension of the 548 service to Hawthorn and Richmond, as discussed during the recent review of bus services in Boroondara, Glen Eira and Stonnington, would be a very positive step to improve north- south public transport connections across the Yarra. There is also a clear need to provide a high quality bus connection from Banyule to the Lilydale railway line. The most obvious such link would be at Camberwell. Currently, patrons of the 548 bus service from La Trobe University who wish to travel further south would probably connect with the 72 tram service on Burke Road which then provides a further connection at Camberwell railway station. According to *VicRoads Traffic Monitor 2007-08* this tram service has the lowest on-time running (69.3%) of all of Melbourne's 22 tram services. Traffic congestion on Burke Road plays a major role in this poor running time record, and will only be resolved by enhanced patronage of public transport on this major arterial road.

Lower Heidelberg Road and Greensborough Highway services

Lower Heidelberg Road and Greensborough Highway are very heavily trafficked roads where there is significant scope to substitute bus commuting for the private motorcar. As shown in Table 4, below, by 2007-08 aggregate 24 hour volumes had risen to 43,946 in the road segment between Lower Plenty Road and Banksia Street and to 50,227 in the road segment between Lower Plenty Road and the Metropolitan Ring Road. There are major peak-time variations with south bound flows being much heavier than north bound flows in the AM peak and north bound flows being much heavier than south bound flows in the PM peak.

Table 4: Greensborough Highway weekday traffic volumes, 2005-06 to 2007-08

	AM Peak volume		**PM Peak volume**		**24 hour volume**	
Road segment by year	**North-bound**	**South-bound**	**North-bound**	**South-bound**	**North-bound**	**South-bound**
Between Lower Plenty Road and Banksia Street						
2005-06	1468	2899	2777	1872	20772	21908
2006-07	1533	2764	2774	1852	20720	21477
2007-08	1586	2686	2820	2019	22113	21833
Between Lower Plenty Road and the Metropolitan Ring Road North						
2005-06	1995	3457	3404	2501	23277	24689
2006-07	2059	3368	3409	2531	23556	24839
2007-08	1999	3215	3419	2678	24260	25967

Source: Traffic System Performance Monitoring Data (VicRoads)

1. AM peak is between 7.30 am and 9.00 am
2. PM peak is between 4.30pm and 6.00pm.

In stark contrast to the high quality east-west 903 Smart Bus service which travels on the heavily trafficked Manningham Road and Bell Street there is no sufficiently direct high frequency seven day a week service on Lower Heidelberg Road and Greensborough Highway. This is despite the fact that traffic volumes on Bell Street are comparable with traffic volumes on the Greensborough Highway. In 2007/08, the measured 24 hour traffic volume on Bell Street (between Lower Heidelberg Road and Albert Street) was 43,080 with a morning peak volume of 5,333 and an afternoon peak volume of 4,647.

Currently The 513 service between Eltham and Glenroy operates two routes through Heidelberg, one via Lower Plenty and the other via Greensborough. It runs with low off-peak frequencies and also runs on Saturdays and Sundays. The 546 service runs from Heidelberg railway station to either Melbourne University or Queen Victoria Market. It is about a 30 to 40 minute frequency service on weekdays and does not operate at all on Saturdays and Sundays. Patronage on the 513 increased significantly in 2007/08 whilst numbers on the 546 reduced.

A fast and frequent direct seven-day a week service from Eltham to Greensborough and Heidelberg via the Greensborough Highway and Lower Heidelberg Road would substantially enhance the choice of transport options available to residents in this area and, most importantly, significantly reduce traffic congestion on these roads.
The Banyule Nillumbik bus review referred to the opportunity to revise connectivity on the Lower Plenty segment of the 513 route which, inter alia, would enable connections with other routes, such as the 546, to be made. We consider that this proposal should be advanced as a high priority.

Bicycling and walking

Recent data indicates that walking and cycling as travel modes are increasing and are probably, in some measure, substituting for travel by private motorcar. This trend should be further encouraged. This review should be cognizant of the trend and do everything it can to facilitate it.

Table 3, above, also shows the facilities available for bicycle storage at each of the railway stations in Banyule. Overall, the scale of the facilities is far too limited for the number of cyclists that should be planned to catch the train at each of these stations. It is especially concerning that there are no cages, the preferred form of secure bicycle storage at any station in Banyule.

Whilst transfers from bicycle to train has been upper most in mind in the provision of these facilities generally further consideration should be given to encouraging cyclists who are also take buses for part of their journey, as a substitute for the motorcar. The ready access of bicycle storage facilities would be central to this objective.

Car parking for bus and train travellers

Table 3 also shows that parking on railway station premises is available for 1411 cars at railway stations in Banyule, and provide for about 35% of the work journeys made by train in 2006 by Banyule residents. There is scope to provide additional car parking facilities for train users.

However, the ability to provide car parking for a large proportion of bus and train travellers is necessarily constrained. It is unlikely that facilities such as the Doncaster Park and Ride in the City of Manningham will be able to be replicated in many other comparable situations. It is questionable whether it is desirable. They are expensive to provide, are space inefficient and do relatively little to discourage car dependency. It is much preferable in the majority of cases to increase the quality of intermodal public transport links and to invest in facilities which maximise connecting journeys by walking, bicycle, bus or train.

Banyule residents: Public transport and destinations of work journeys

Table 5, below, shows the destinations, by local government area, of daily journeys to work by residents of Banyule, as recorded in the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. The table shows journeys by all modes, as a car driver and by public transport. Other work journeys, such as by car passenger (a very small proportion of all work journeys), walking and cycling are not shown but each comprises a relatively small proportion of journeys.

Work journeys by car drivers' account for over 61% of all work journeys and journeys by public transport accounted for a mere 12%. One of the most striking features of these data is the fact that of the residents of Banyule who also work in Banyule (13,701) only 439 use public transport. 7396 of these (54%) drove to work. These figures are strongly indicative of the poor quality of the public transport system for relatively short journeys.

As an aside, this outcome contrasts very strongly with the inner city of Melbourne where relatively few journeys to work by residents are taken by car. It is even more the case in recent years in overseas cities which have had striking success in reducing car dependency.

Similarly, car drivers heavily outnumber public transport users amongst Banyule residents who work in the neighbouring municipalities of Boroondara, Darebin, Yarra, Moreland, Manningham, Whittlesea and Nillumbik: 12,176 compared with 738. This is a very poor result, and one this review should address with urgency.

There are major warning signs here with indications of the further development of car dependent suburbs to the west and north of Banyule with insufficiently planned development of bus and rail infrastructure and services.

By way of contrast, it is notable that nearly three times as many Banyule residents who work in inner Melbourne travel by public transport than drive a car.

Table 5: Mode of travel to work, residents of Banyule, 2006

Destinations	All modes	As car driver	By public transport
Banyule	13,701	7,396	439
Melbourne, Inner	5,024	1,068	3,072
Melbourne, Rest	4,681	2,269	1,458
Darebin	4,563	3,319	222
Whittlesea	3,058	2,409	63
Yarra	2,436	1,684	263
Hume	2,103	1,782	31
Boroondara	2,065	1,596	87
Nillumbik	1,776	1,257	62
Whitehorse	1,440	1,141	72
Port Phillip	1,353	803	355
Manningham	1,321	989	N/A
Moreland	1,154	922	41
Monash	915	769	32
Stonnington	594	432	71
Brimbank	594	515	N/A
Moonee Valley	552	455	21
Maroondah	393	326	N/A
Others	7,919	5,102	587
Totals	55,642	34,234	6,805

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing (ABS)

Melbourne Airport as a case study

Melbourne Airport is an interesting case study of much that is wrong with Melbourne's public transport system. This airport is probably one of the largest single daily road traffic destinations in Melbourne, and growing quickly. Although VicRoads has no reliable up-to-date data on traffic movements in and out of Melbourne Airport, it is estimated that in the order of 45,000 motor vehicles travel to Melbourne Airport every day. A high proportion of this is motorcar traffic. It appears, therefore, that the volume of traffic entering Melbourne Airport every day is roughly equivalent to the 24 hour traffic count on the Greensborough Highway or Bell Street in the City of Banyule.

However, it appear that only 3 route buses service Melbourne Airport, the 478 and 479 from Moonee Ponds and the 500 between Sunbury and Broadmeadows. They provide minimal daylight hours services only and self-evidently none of them serve suburbs to the south east, including the City of Banyule.

There is clearly an urgent present need to be addressed through this review to transfer a significant proportion of this traffic to Melbourne Airport and other outer urban destinations from the motorcar to public transport.

Whilst much is said about the lack of speedy public transport between the CBD and Melbourne Airport and the opportunities missed to remedy the problem, just as grave a problem is the lack of direct access from middle suburban areas such as Banyule. It does not make sense to expect Banyule residents to travel the extra distance to central Melbourne to connect with a speedy connection to the airport.

Town planning and road quality issues

Planning in and around activity centres is a key issue for the delivery of high quality route bus services. The Department of Transport made an effort in 2008 to acknowledge this as an issue when it released *Public Transport: guidelines for land use and development.*

Improvements have recently been made to the transit infrastructure at Northland but the arrangements at Greensborough are clearly sub-optimal, especially in relation to access to the railway station. The infrastructure at the major activity centre of Heidelberg and the associated Austin Biomedical Alliance Precinct is under pressure and need to be upgraded in anticipation of increased bus and utilisation. The same is true in Ivanhoe, in and around the level crossing, and because of associated traffic congestion in Upper Heidelberg Road.

The design of the local road network in parts of Banyule, especially in the north, is suboptimal for the provision of route bus services. This is a particular difficulty for neighbourhood bus services where local road networks are not designed on a grid pattern, but are often comprised of a “spine” which feeds cul de sacs or courts. This reduces the options for designing efficient bus routes and tends to increase the walking distance to the nearest bus stop. These roads were designed when the idea of the “dormitory suburb” was taken as a given and public transport short sightedly considered a thing of the past. Opportunities to remedy this situation are limited but when they do present they should be approached with a view to maximising the efficiency of available bus routes.

There is also a range of traffic calming measures in use which make the ride less pleasant and the bus driver’s task more difficult. These measures include roundabouts, chicanes and rumble strips. These measures, where in use should be designed to minimise operational difficulties for buses. Rumble strips, for instance, should permit buses to straddle them and there are design options for roundabouts.

Bus shelters, timetable information and signage

The quality of necessary infrastructure, including bus shelters, on-location timetable information and directional signage is very variable across the public transport network in Banyule.

The quality and availability of non-vehicle infrastructure should be addressed as part of this review because it plays an important role in attracting and retaining public

transport patrons. In some cases it can be as significant an influence as regular on-time running in attracting and retaining patrons as users, when they observe they are being taken for granted through slovenly service delivery, will naturally look elsewhere. Unfortunately, there are plenty of negative illustrations of this type of service failure right across the network today.

Bus shelters should be progressively extended across the network with first priority being given to actual and potential higher frequency use locations. It appears that the location of bus stops and installation of shelters in many locations involves the relevant local government authority, MetLink and an advertising company. In some cases these agencies have not attached any sense of urgency or importance to the location, installation and maintenance of bus shelters and bus stops. Some bus shelters, where provided, are in poor condition, typically with missing glass or other panelling, which makes them less effective for protecting users in bad weather.

Sometimes timetables are available on board the bus, and sometimes not. They should always be available on request. The responsiveness of drivers to requests for route information is very inconsistent. Some are informed, interested and engaged. Others are not. Timetables are available at the majority of stops, but sometimes they are missing.

Signage maps and timetables should be bold, intuitive and good fun. The product of high performance overseas public transport operators will provide useful guidance in this respect. Too often Melbourne public transport signage is not “user friendly.” For these purposes it should be assumed that every user is a new user with bad eyesight, little time and is unfamiliar with his surroundings. One example where things have not been got quite right is at Heidelberg railway station where signage showing the location of the stop for the 513 is located very obscurely and would be missed by most new users. The route maps at bus stops are far too cluttered and not in sufficiently bold colours. They could also be substantially improved by the inclusion of a “you are here” mark to assist users to orient themselves.

Marketing and promotion

There is often a significant inertia factor in effecting modal shift in transport. This can be the consequence of an information deficiency, as well as ingrained habit on the part of transport users, especially in traditionally car dependent locations. It is therefore very important that positive changes that result from the review are heavily marketed. This should incorporate high quality letter box drops and involve contributions from the Department of Transport and local government authorities.

Conclusions

There are major threats to the natural and the built environment in Banyule from increases in car dependency. These can only be allayed with significantly greater usage of public transport and also cycling and walking. There is an opportunity with this review of bus services in providing the capability to do this.

Bus services in Banyule should be making a much larger contribution for the residents of Banyule and of surrounding municipalities. The City of Banyule seems to be lagging the recent increases in bus patronage across the Melbourne metropolitan area. There are significant weaknesses in the reach of current services, as well as their connectivity to train services. All services that do not operate seven days a week should do so and service frequency needs to be elevated for both major services and local services. There is a particular need to target the standard of service available on major arterial roads

Significant influences in the broader environment will also significantly affect residents of Banyule. Some of these have been addressed in other completed reviews, a few of which are referred to above. Others will need to be addressed in future reviews, including that for the City of Melbourne and the City of Yarra.

A larger concern relates to the knock-on effects on the residents of Banyule from the proposed expansion of Melbourne and large new greenfields developments in an environment in which too little has been done to provide for public transport in these areas.

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