

# TRANSCRIPT

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Subcommittee

### Inquiry into infrastructure projects

Melbourne — 19 October 2016

#### Members

Mr Joshua Morris — Chair

Mr Khalil Eideh — Deputy Chair

Mr Jeff Bourman

Mr Nazih Elasmr

Mr Bernie Finn

Ms Colleen Hartland

Mr Shaun Leane

Mr Craig Ondarchie

#### Participating member

Ms Samantha Dunn

#### Staff

Secretary: Lilian Topic

#### Witness

Mr Jeroen Weimar, chief executive officer, Public Transport Victoria.

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure public hearing. Thank you, Mr Weimar, for your presence and for providing some testimony to our committee today. Today we are hearing evidence in relation to our infrastructure inquiry, and today's evidence is being recorded. This hearing is to inform the third of at least six reports into infrastructure projects, and witnesses present may well be invited to attend future hearings. All evidence taken today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected for what you say in here today, but if you go outside and repeat those same things, they may not be covered by this same privilege. Once again, welcome. Thank you for your attendance today. If you could just tell us your name and title and then move into the presentation that I see you have for us, we will follow with some questions from the committee. Over to you.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Thank you, Chair. I am Jeroen Weimar, the CEO of Public Transport Victoria. Thank you again for the opportunity to update you on some of our infrastructure works in front of this committee. I have provided a short presentation really on two themes: one to, I guess, finish the story of the conversation we had last time I was before this committee looking at the restoration of the V/Line regional train services — I will not take long on that; and then a quick overview of all the other activity we are doing in the infrastructure space in PTV at the moment. It is a busy program.

On the first substantive slide, we are looking at the impact on passengers of course from the disruption to our regional V/Line train services at the start of this year. What I can confirm, of course, is that we fully restored all of our timetabled train services on 26 June. That was a progressive redeployment, so we returned to 93 per cent of services by 21 March, and that had a significant reduction in the number of passengers negatively impacted. From 26 June we had a full remediation of services.

Since then, if you turn the page, what I have set out there in the purple line is the on-time performance of the V/Line train service compared to the previous year, the green line. As you will see, from January through to May of course we had quite poor performance on the V/Line network because of a significant number of services that we converted to road coaches. Since certainly the full restoration of the timetable in June, we have seen a consistent and steady improvement in the punctuality of on-time services, and I am obviously pleased to see that although we had to have the forbearance of our regional passengers in the first half of the year, we are now seeing a consistent and steady return to service over the last three or four months.

Of course it is also worth noticing that since 26 June we also introduced a new regional V/Line timetable on 27 June. That provided additional daily services, particularly between Southern Cross and Bendigo, Epsom, Eaglehawk and Kangaroo Flat as part of the Bendigo metro redeployment. That really kind of provided the additional set of services that we know that those customers were keen to see.

A related area, of course, is to ensure that we sustain the investment in maintenance of the V/Line infrastructure. So we have increased our investment in the 2016–17 financial year in the ongoing maintenance of the railway asset. We are now spending \$187 million in this financial year compared to \$123 million in 2015–16. That includes around \$68 million on improving track, \$10 million on improving signals and communication and around another \$11 million on stations, structures, bridges et cetera, also with some work being done on the freight network.

So we now have, we believe, a sustainable program of work on the regional rail network to ensure that we do not go back to the problems we had at the start of this year. An example of that work in practice, of course, is that as we speak we are now working on the Bendigo line, so we have a one-month closure of the Bendigo line to do around \$46 million worth of critical asset maintenance work. We are replacing around 1000 sleepers over almost 380 kilometres of track, and we are undertaking a lot of work on the key structures and rail bridges on that section.

Let me turn briefly, then, to our wider infrastructure portfolio and some of the infrastructure programs we are running. You will see on the colourful slide on page 7 a schematic of the scale of the public transport network that we operate here in Victoria. We have 219 metropolitan stations, 110 V/Line stations, almost 1800 tram stops, lots of track, another 18 000 or so bus stops within the metropolitan Melbourne area and another 7000 bus stops in regional Victoria. This is a very large and complex network with lots of moving pieces, and therefore we have a continual program of asset management and a continual program of maintenance and renewal.

That work goes on every single day, so every single day and every single night there will be work happening on some part of our network or other. We are spending at the moment around \$250 million a year on just

maintaining the metropolitan railway asset through our operator Metro. We are spending around \$55 million a year on maintaining the tram network through our operator Yarra Trams and as I said earlier, around \$180 million to \$187 million, again maintaining the regional rail network. What that translates to is engineers and infrastructure crews working around the year to maintain those vital assets, often in the dark hours when nobody will notice but also through strategic shuts and occupations.

On slide 8 you will see a list of the more significant infrastructure projects, again to give you a sense of the significant renewal and upgrade work that we are undertaking. Recently we have completed such major projects as the brand-new Preston tram depot. We have also completed the Toorak tram terminus. We have worked on Waurn Ponds station with installation of crossing loops et cetera, and there is another whole list there, which I will not read out, of station works, station upgrades, station reworks, significant safety upgrades on the city loop and just the ongoing management and maintenance of our bus infrastructure.

We are also of course, as well as maintaining and upgrading the core public transport network, supporting the major infrastructure program. You will have spoken to my colleagues earlier today from Melbourne Metro and the level crossing authority so I will not get into their space. But we have a significant role in facilitating their work program and their occupations of the live railway network and overseeing and ensuring that all those pieces fit together.

As an example, on slide 9 I have set out the kind of significant occupations we are managing at the moment in the next few weeks. Again I am not going to read them out, but what I wanted to give the committee a flavour of is that we are investing a lot of time and energy in supporting our passengers through these major disruptive occupations. So we know that when we closed the Sunbury line for a month because of the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings work our passengers were being disrupted. We arranged significant alternative replacement services, in this case coach services. We worked very closely with agencies such as VicRoads to ensure the best possible routing and alternative traffic priority for those coach services so we could really improve their journeys as much as possible, because this critical infrastructure work needs to happen, and we all know what happens when it does not.

We have a whole series of these major occupations and disruptions coming up in the coming weeks and months, and this work will continue for years ahead. We are in a significant phase of major infrastructure works across particularly the metropolitan area but also in our regional areas, and we have a very active program of working with our passengers to keep them informed and to ensure that they can make their journeys effectively during that period of time.

My final words really, Chair: on slides 10 and 11 there is a quick look back at another major occupation we ran, which was on the Frankston line. Again, this will give you a sense of the numbers and the scale of effort it takes to deal with, in this case, three grade separations, three new stations and a significant number of passengers affected. We dealt there with 31 000 replacement bus services over a five-week period. We carried 780 000 passengers on those particular journeys. You can see on a weekday level that that translated to around 627 000 of those travelling during the week, so there were a lot of people we had to manage through that network. In addition to that we had a significant number of passengers moving to the Sandringham line and moving to the Dandenong line as they moved around. So it was a significant network activity to manage that as far as possible.

I will close by giving you some sense of what our passengers thought of that activity. Clearly people were significantly delayed in some of their journeys, but what we did see was around 75 per cent of passengers on the Frankston line south of Caulfield impacted by this closure, with around 60 per cent of them using the alternative replacement bus services and the other 40 per cent finding alternative routes. But 9 out of 10 people were satisfied with the way the closure was managed because they understood the benefits they would get in terms of improved infrastructure, and 85 per cent were happy with the bus replacement services that we worked on.

So we are not resting on our laurels. We will continue to look for ways to do this better, but we are working on a major program here and we are very aware of the need to manage both the infrastructure requirements and the day-to-day services on one of the world's largest public transport networks. With that, I will hand back to you, Chair.

**The CHAIR** — Fabulous. Thank you, Mr Weimar. I appreciate your presentation. I was hoping to start with a question along the lines of one of those infrastructure projects that PTV is currently involved in — that being

the Caroline Springs railway station. Obviously the flow-on of that line goes into western Victoria, my electorate. There have been concerns about the impact that station is going to have on basically the capacity for people to find a seat on the way home from work and indeed the timing both to and from Melbourne. Can you give us an idea of when Caroline Springs station is likely to come on line and how the impact on the Ballarat line will attempt to be mitigated?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Yes, of course. Caroline Springs station is an example of one of those stations, a bit like Melton, a bit like Tarneit and Wyndham Vale, which is in the middle of a really important growth area. Our outer western suburban fringe is growing very significantly in Melbourne. We are seeing a lot of demand for public transport services from people coming into town, and we recognise the impact that those peri-urban passengers will have on the longer distance passengers from places such as Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. With the work we are doing on Caroline Springs we have taken a proactive decision to futureproof the capacity constraints at Caroline Springs by ensuring that the station, when it opens, will be a double-sided station.

So it will facilitate the dual-tracking and the upgrade program that the government has announced on the Ballarat line. That is the work that is happening as we speak at Ballarat station to ensure that we are station ready for the dual track and that we do not then need to close it again further down the road to bring that facility on board. At the same time we are now taking a long and hard look at the timetable options for the Ballarat line along with the rest of our regional network. We are very keen to boost the number of train services, particularly the off-peak on the Ballarat line and the rest of our regional network, because we think there is demand in those shoulders. And we are currently looking at how we best manage the stopping pattern between Caroline Springs and Ballarat and the rest of the intervening stations. That work is not complete yet. We will certainly make an announcement, and we will talk to local passengers about the right way to balance the needs of all of the passengers along that line.

**The CHAIR** — And the opening of Caroline Springs station?

**Mr WEIMAR** — The work we are doing at the moment looks at the timetabling of those services, and we will announce the opening of the station in line with that. So the work is being completed. I am confident that we are on track to do that, but clearly what we do not want to do is to open a station before we are very clear about the timetable that will support and balance the needs for both the passengers at Caroline Springs and those on the rest of the line.

**The CHAIR** — On the slide entitled ‘V/Line remediation plan summary’ I note that you are talking about an investment there above and beyond the remediation plan activities. I am interested in the cost of those remediation plan activities. You may have some details with you or you may need to take that on notice.

**Mr WEIMAR** — I am happy to provide you with the information that I have. I think, as we advised the committee the last time I appeared, when we last spoke at the committee we talked about the wheel-wear replacement costs being in the region of \$50 to \$60 million. I am pleased to confirm — relatively speaking — that the actual cost was \$47 million to deal with the wheel wear, and the bulk of that cost was really around providing the coach replacement services. There was a significant amount of investment to ensure that we could keep our regional passengers moving during that disruption period. Obviously there were some costs around the actual maintenance work, and there were some costs around the actual fitting of the trains and the fitting of the wheels. So \$47 million is the cost we have now taken into our books for 2015–16. That has been funded by the government and we have closed the book on that, and now we move forward with a stable funding platform.

**The CHAIR** — So there was an additional allocation of funds from the government to cover — —

**Mr WEIMAR** — We covered that with a combination of contingency within PTV and V/Line, and we resolved that with the government in terms of how that was going to get funded.

**The CHAIR** — As part of that \$47 million do you have a breakdown of the cost of the replacement coaches?

**Mr WEIMAR** — I do, yes. The cost of the replacement coaches was \$27.2 million.

**The CHAIR** — Okay. Great. I appreciate that response. There is one question that I have actually been trying to get an answer to for a little while. I put a question on notice to the minister about this and was advised

that it was publicly available, and yet I have had a number of people ask me this same question, who have not been able to find the details. I was looking for the length of track that exists from Southern Cross station to basically every V/Line station in outlying areas — Ballarat, Bendigo and in between. I am wondering if you might be able to — and feel free to take this on notice — point me in the right direction as to where I might be able to find such information about the length of track between Southern Cross station and all the smallest regional stations that exist.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Chair, let me take that question on notice and I will come back to you directly on that. The explanation I will give you now is that there will be two answers to that question. There is the V/Line operated and maintained track, which runs outside the metropolitan area — the actual regional track bed that we run outside the metropolitan area. Of course almost all those V/Line trains going in and out of Southern Cross also run over Metro tracks. So I will give you the track kilometrage which is operated and maintained by V/Line.

**The CHAIR** — Okay. That would be great if you could, and then could you give the length of track between Southern Cross station where it becomes the V/Line track?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Absolutely. For my colleagues in the audience, I will give you three answers. I will give you the kilometrage of the Metro network; I will give you the full measurement. I will give you the kilometrage of the Metro network used by V/Line trains, and I will give you the kilometrage of the V/Line passenger network in its entirety.

**The CHAIR** — Fabulous. I do very much appreciate that.

**Mr LEANE** — And the width.

**The CHAIR** — ‘The width’ — hopefully that is standard, Mr Leane.

**Mr WEIMAR** — It is all broad-gauge track.

**The CHAIR** — I just have two further questions, which I am quite sure you will want to take on notice. First, how many staff from PTV have transferred to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources between 1 January this year and today? And the next one is, how many staff have resigned from Public Transport Victoria during that same period, not including retirements due to age or health reasons?

**Mr WEIMAR** — As you say, I will take both of those on notice and then come back to you.

**Mr LEANE** — Thank you for assisting our committee. Real-time information is very important, and I think it has changed bus movements greatly as far as the displays that you have on the bus stops now. Can you fill in the committee on any growth we have had in that area, as far as people being able to get real-time information on whatever mode of transport that they are looking for?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Absolutely. We are currently in a position where we provide real-time information to our passengers on Yarra Trams. We provide real-time information to all of our metropolitan bus customers through a combination of on-street displays but also through the PTV app, which uses real-time information for metropolitan buses. And we are also starting to deploy real-time information to our regional cities, so we are trialling some work in Bendigo at the moment. We have the buses in Bendigo on real-time information, again via the PTV app and via a passenger information display, and we will be deploying that over to Geelong, Ballarat and Traralgon in the not-too-distant future.

We are at a very advanced stage of being able to work on real-time information for Metro Trains, and I expect we will be making an announcement in the coming weeks around the release of real-time information in that space. That will also be released via the PTV integrated app as well as being available through Metro’s physical infrastructure in terms of their displays.

What is also important to notice is that where we provide real-time information for our modes, it is also openly accessible to all developers of information systems. So PTV makes its data — its timetable data and real-time information — available to all application developers. For example, Google Transit, Google Maps and a whole host of other third-party developers of applications and mapping software are able to tap into that information and use it for their own journey planners because we want our passengers to have the widest possible choice of

information. There is no point in holding onto it. We want it widely used because it helps people make better decisions about how they travel.

**Mr LEANE** — Evan Tattersall from the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority project dobbed you in to answer some questions this afternoon.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Thanks, Evan.

**Mr LEANE** — I asked him about the increased capacity of the city loop when the Metro tunnel kicks in and what that means to a line like Frankston. My understanding is that at peak times it gives the ability to run trains every 4 minutes. Can you answer Evan's question?

**Mr WEIMAR** — I can indeed. Currently the city loop during the morning peak is full. We cannot run any additional trains through the city loop. What that means at the moment is, if you are travelling from Frankston and if you are travelling from Sunbury and a number of other locations, you will end up with some of your morning peak trains running direct and some of your morning trains running through the city loop. Now, some of our passengers want to go direct to Southern Cross or Flinders Street. Depending on where they are coming from, some want to go around the city loop. It is a hotly debated issue, where you want to go. But what it gives us as a network is a very unpredictable service pattern.

So one of the great benefits of the Metro tunnel project is it enables us to take significant capacity on the city loop. Why? Because all the Dandenong and Sunbury trains will then run underneath the city loop so they will be taking a significant chunk of current demand out of the city loop. What that will enable us to do is run a lot of additional services — from Frankston, from Craigieburn, from around the network — around the city loop during their morning peak services. It will give us a much more predictable service pattern so people will know — if they are catching a train from Frankston or from Craigieburn, they will know — the direction that train is always going to take, as opposed to being a bit of a lottery between a direct train or a loop train. I think that is a really important benefit for our passengers.

That is why the Metro tunnel project gives benefits to all Metro network users, because it just simplifies and increases the capacity on all of our lines and will allow us to run more frequent trains, where the demand is there, on a different lengths of the network.

**Mr LEANE** — So you said there is no capacity for any extra services in the loop?

**Mr WEIMAR** — At this point — in the morning peak, at this point in time — I have no capacity for additional services. We are constrained essentially — in running more services for passengers we are constrained by the amount of track space we have when the city loop is essentially full at peak demand points, by the number of trains we have and by the number of drivers we have. Well, we are investing significantly in new rolling stock and new trains coming onto the network — whether they be X'trapolises or the new high-capacity Metro train. We are investing significantly in additional drivers to strengthen it and to give us more people who can drive our trains, but the constraint at the moment is the city loop infrastructure, because I cannot create more capacity in there.

Going forward, Metro tunnel is our big bottleneck reliever on the city loop. We will also start to look, going forward, at high-capacity signalling and seeing how that can start to give us more capacity on other parts of our network.

**Mr LEANE** — So that bottleneck that you just explained, is it an impediment on introducing any new spurs, as in the discussion around the airport rail or Rowville?

**Mr WEIMAR** — That is right, that is right. So if we wanted to — look, we would love to run a rail service to the airport. At this point in time there is a challenge of building the infrastructure, but also we have no capacity in the city loop to actually bring those trains in.

**Mr LEANE** — Yes, and therefore the Infrastructure Victoria report around that spur to the airport may be a 15 to 30-year, medium-term project — —

**Mr WEIMAR** — Correct; that is right. Look they are quite right. I think the Infrastructure Victoria report, without going through all of its pages, from our point of view is very important in terms of giving us a 2026 and

beyond program, and giving us an indication about those medium-to-long-term priorities that we need to be planning for now and looking at how we fit into the network. But there is certainly no track capacity and there is no system capacity over the next 10 years until we get Melbourne Metro tunnel to develop the rail link and to bring it into our network.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I have got a few questions about forward planning. Clearly, in my mind, the lack of money for decades by a range of governments has really put us in the situation we are in now. To be able to cope in 20 years' time, obviously Metro tunnel will have a profound effect on that. But what are the big projects that you see coming up, especially dealing with the growth areas?

**Mr WEIMAR** — I think there are two significant issues in terms of the effective stewardship of the public transport network going forward. One is that we are starting to, as we have done with the V/Line area, look much more carefully at the ongoing asset management and maintenance because we have largely a very mature network — I am being generous — and we need to continue to invest in and maintain that network to ensure that we are providing not only a safe system but also a reliable system. And when assets get older — when track gets older, when signals get older, when power systems start failing — they start to decay, they start to degrade and they start to fail at inconvenient times, and that has a direct knock-on to people's journeys today. So ensuring a progressive and sustained amount of investment in our ongoing maintenance and renewal is really important. That is an important focus for us at the moment, and we are looking to explore with our future contracts for Yarra and for Metro a significant focus on how we get a better balance on steady state asset maintenance and renewal.

In the other areas about how we see the future growth of Melbourne, we are doing a lot of work across the whole transport portfolio at the moment with our colleagues in the roads business — the department and in PTV — around where we see the growth occurring. If we look at our current population trends and the ongoing concentration of growth within the CBD, we see an awful lot of growth in that peri-urban area to the north and west of Melbourne. So that starts to give us significant longer term requirements around how we boost rail capacity in those parts of our network. Of course Metro tunnel will help us to that extent because it will really open up the whole Sunbury corridor significantly. But we see the onward expansion towards the Melton area, we see that whole peri-urban area as being a significant area that will need sustained investment, certainly in railways.

I think it is important that we also look at the role of bus. We are doing a lot of work in the short to medium term around improving and reviewing our bus networks. We did a lot of work in the western fringe of Melbourne already; we are now looking towards the south-east. Buses will be particularly important for those new communities and new suburbs that are starting to develop, not only as a solution in its own right but as a connecting solution whereby we connect new communities into the rail and, where necessary, the tram network so people can actually make a more sustainable, efficient and connected journey from their home to where they are getting to, rather than having to drive to the station and take up more car parking space.

**Ms HARTLAND** — On that subject around buses, though — and I use buses and trains a fair bit, and my bus pulls in and my train pulls out, that connection between the timetable — there are situations like the Altona loop that had its timetable cut under the Baillieu-Napthine government and not restored under the current government, which has really left that line quite unreliable. Also, because that line was one that was used predominantly by older people for daytime activities, that has really left them without transport.

The other thing with the buses is that — I use the 216, the 219 and the 220 — I am never really sure whether they are actually going to turn up. I have actually gone to the bus stop according to the timetable, and they have come 5 minutes early, or they just do not turn up. There just does not seem to be any complaint mechanism for buses as well. I get a lot of complaints into my office about buses, but nobody actually deals with them, and so then people feel they are totally unreliable and do not want to use them, and then the service gets cut because of all of those things. So how are you going to resolve it? I understand that you have got the principles, but how are you going to fix it?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Yes. At a very practical level, this actually goes back to the earlier question on real-time information. Now that we have real-time information on how buses are actually running, we have teams of people who are now scrutinising the day-to-day operational performance of every single bus operator on every single bus route. We are now having robust conversations with individual operators around the performance of their buses — whether they are departing early, whether they are departing on time or whether they are arriving

late, and not only at the starting points but at intermediate points along every single bus route. That, to me, is about good performance management. Ultimately PTV is responsible for ensuring that that bus leaves its stop on time and gets to the next stop on time, and we are working very closely with the operators to ensure that actually happens.

We would absolutely encourage not only MPs but members of the public to talk to PTV. We get a significant amount of feedback and complaints from passengers to say, 'We're concerned about parts of the service', but I would agree with you that bus is still a bit hidden for many people. If they are not regular bus users, it is a difficult system sometimes to navigate, and that is why we are putting a lot of investment into both putting in the real-time information and making the maps more legible. We are running a campaign at this very moment around how we make the bus in Melbourne more visible and how we encourage people to use it, to try the bus.

**Ms HARTLAND** — As someone who has regularly complained, I do not find your complaint service very helpful. I get pretty much the same response each time — 'Oh, sorry' — but no explanation and no 'how it is going to be fixed in the future'. I have had incidents where — I get on at Middle Footscray or West Footscray — trains just go through. There is no announcement, so people cannot get off or cannot get on. This is a regular thing. With the buses, overcrowding is a significant problem, where people are left behind on the platform, and you complain and — no, nothing. Nothing changes, and it is a very patronising attitude towards passengers and just a total lack of information.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Okay, I will take that feedback on board and maybe I will look back over some of the records we have had.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I have given this feedback on a dozen occasions, and I do not see much improvement — and I am a regular user. I deliberately make sure that I am using services so I know what other residents are having to deal with.

**Mr WEIMAR** — I will take that feedback on board. Thank you.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I want to ask a question around the PTV's P and L. I am interested to know: if we take in trains, trams, buses and V/Line, what percentage of your recurrent costs are being recovered through the fare box?

**Mr WEIMAR** — The broad number — and I have not got the calculation right in front of me — is that we recover around 30 to 35 per cent of our recurrent costs at the fare box.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — And how does that compare to other transport networks, say in Australia or in modernised countries?

**Mr WEIMAR** — I can certainly talk to you from my experience directly in London. In London we recovered a much higher proportion at the fare box. Again, you are usually dealing with a mix of operating costs and capital costs. Based on the core day-to-day operating costs, in London we would recover around 80 to 85 per cent of the cost from the fare box. Having said that, of course, you will know — those of you who have been to London — that the cost of the public transport fares there are very, very high by comparison to what we see in Melbourne and Victoria.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — What strategies do you choose to employ to try to increase that recovery rate?

**Mr WEIMAR** — The most important lever that we have got as PTV is of course to focus on fare compliance. We have spent a lot of time over the last two or three years driving down the fare evasion rate, and I am pleased to say we have now got the highest level of fare compliance from Victorians on the network that we have had certainly for the last 11 years, which is when we started counting. So over 96 per cent of our passengers in Melbourne pay the right fare for their journey — that is over 97 per cent for the trains and for the trams. We have cut the losses there from over \$50 million to under \$30 million within Melbourne, so I think we have got a good grip and control on the fare compliance rate, and that is very important, because it is important that we protect as much revenue as we can. Clearly, there is a wider matter for government around what level of fares you set and the level of investment that you are able to put into the network.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — When it comes to fares and paying for your fares, one of the most modern technologies I find being used at restaurants and all other places is that payWave technology.



**Mr WEIMAR** — That is right.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Is there an intention for PTV to ensure that payWave technology or other forms of technology can be used to top up your myki card?

**Mr WEIMAR** — As you may recall, about three months ago we announced a new contract for the running of the myki system.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — With NTT DATA?

**Mr WEIMAR** — That is right. We are now transitioning into that service, and that contract will formally start in January. At the same time we are now undertaking some work with some international experts around options for introducing alternative forms of payment into the Melbourne system. So we are looking at options at the moment, but that work will probably take us around six to eight months to work out what kind of options we have got and what kind of trials we might choose to run.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Given NTT DATA has had some experience with the myki system, why would you not have just mandated that in the contract?

**Mr WEIMAR** — You will recall the RFP for this was sent out some time ago now. The principle behind the myki contract was, frankly — and this was before certainly my time — we have spent an awful lot of investment and time and energy to get the myki system up and running within Victoria.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — That is no surprise to any Victorian.

**Mr WEIMAR** — That is right. But what we have seen over the past two to three years in particular is a stable and well-running system which runs with a high degree of efficiency and with a high degree of the effectiveness, and customer satisfaction as a result has increased significantly over those last two years. We took a view that with that investment that has gone in and with a huge amount of investment going into our infrastructure, the disruptions I talked about earlier and all the other changes on the network, we needed to ensure stability within our fare devices and we needed ensure stability around our revenue base.

We have extended, therefore, the existing myki service package and service infrastructure. There is an improvements program that we have mandated within the contract, which is primarily about introducing faster payment devices, reducing the waiting time for online top-ups and improving the service that our customers get when they use myki, but we have not mandated the introduction of new technology. Introducing, for example, mobile phone-based payWave-type payment systems involves a fundamental redesign of the system whereby you move from a transaction card-based system to an account-based system. That is a fundamental redesign at the heart of the software — —

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Do you think it increased the risk profile not doing that?

**Mr WEIMAR** — You change the risk profile in doing so. There are pros and cons of both systems, so what is attractive about the card-based system is that people can have a pay-as-you-go card. I can use my payWave card, and if I am not using it, I can transfer it to you and you can use it. It gives us that flexibility. With an account-based system you do not have that flexibility.

So there are pros and cons in all these areas. Our point is that certainly we wanted to ensure stability and familiarity for our customers at this point in time whereby we are changing their public transport services, so let us keep the payment platform — and it is an integrated payment platform — consistent and working at the high level of 99.99 per cent that we are seeing at the moment. But we are, to your point, looking at what other forms of technology can we start to introduce around that that deals with those customers who have got slightly different needs. I fully accept myki does not work for every single passenger every single time. There are other things that people would like us to do, and that is what we are exploring.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Just touching on that not working for every customer — I do not want to talk about myki because I want to make this as painless possible — do you segment your customer base? Do you know, say, by age profile who is using the system?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Yes, we do, so essentially we have two key sources of information. We do a lot of survey work across the network. We survey passengers around where they are travelling to, where their journeys are starting from and where they are ending to, where they are transferring from train to tram or from bus to tram et cetera, so we do segment them by age and by profile but also by the purpose of their journey. Are they going to work? Are they going to education? Are they taking social services? What are they trying to do? We get some information out of the myki system from those customers who choose to register their myki cards, so we get some information about their travel patterns. But yes, we have a good amount of segmentation that we can access.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I like slide 7. Would we be able to get that data on your segmentation? Would we be able to see that data?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Of course, yes. A bit of direction around what you would find interesting would help me.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I think age profile is interesting, but I think purpose of journey is interesting as well.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Sure. What I will do is I will put a short report together for the committee around what that looks like and some guidelines around it.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — That would be great. Thank you.

**Ms HARTLAND** — In terms of other major projects — things like Doncaster and Rowville, which always feel like they are in the never-never extension of some of those lines into the growth areas — where do you see those kind of major projects?

**Mr WEIMAR** — In terms of line extensions or — —

**Ms HARTLAND** — With Rowville and Doncaster, creating them. What do you see as the other lines and other services that we need, especially obviously with major infrastructure?

**Mr WEIMAR** — My focus at the moment is very much around how I manage the network through this major upgrade phase we are in for the next 10 years. My focus is very much on today, tomorrow and the next 10 years around how I manage the network through and how we meet some of the critical pressures on it and this major infrastructure program that we are already committed to.

We are starting to have a look at the longer term projections — what does the 30-year horizon look like — and we are starting to see the growth trends. I think the growth pressures that are actually on our network are that we are seeing both a progressive increasing of density of the residential footprint within the metropolitan Melbourne area and the regional cities.

We can see that all around us. We can see it on our tram network in terms of the growth and demand on the tram network as we see more apartment blocks being built within 2 to 3 kilometres of the CBD, and we are seeing it on the metro trains network, where we are seeing significant increases in development around stations across the entire network. We think that will continue, and that will put more challenges on how we increase the frequency of services. It will put more challenges on how we maintain and increase the speed of services and speed of journeys to accommodate a much bigger footprint.

We are expecting even just in the next 15 years a doubling of the number of passengers on the metropolitan rail network. It is a huge amount of growth that we are going to have to accommodate on what is essentially the same footprint of the train system that we have at the moment, with the addition of the metro tunnel.

The other key area for growth we see, as I said, will be in that north-west of the ring, outside the major metropolitan area. We are looking at what does that do and how do you service that and, particularly from my point of view, how do I progressively move from providing early levels of public transport use to new suburbs and to new communities where you do not have the density where you can justify putting in a huge rail service, and how do you progressively step that up from on-demand transport to a regular bus service, to a good connected service and ultimately to, where you can, either extending existing railway lines or building new stations. That is a progressive rollout policy. I have to say, with respect, I have not got a plan in front of me that says, 'Here's what I want to build and here's the bill for it', but that is the early work that we are starting to do now with other parts of government.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I have got a couple that I will give you on notice and one final one, if that is okay. It is painless. Do not worry about it. One is around Epping north. In 2002, back then the Urban Land Authority sold land on behalf of the government to residences, and part of the marketing profile was that there was going to be an extension of the then Epping line to Epping north. We know it has progressed to South Morang and there is a plan to continue it to Mernda. The residents of that estate, particularly one called Aurora, are wondering where their train station is. Can you give me some advice on where that is up to?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Yes. Epping north. That is fine.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — The other one is around the car parking at South Morang. Now, I know PTV have gone to a lot of lengths over the last three years to try and increase the capacity at South Morang, but the reality is with an area that is attracting 173 new residents every week that continues to grow, so the amount, even parking outside that designated car park. Could you give us some indication at some point, on notice, about what the plan is to support that growth at South Morang while we are waiting for the Mernda rail extension to continue?

**Mr WEIMAR** — Yes, happy to do that.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — And the final one, and this will be an easy one for you, I am an ambassador, as you know, for Guide Dogs Victoria. Would you like to talk to us about the relationship PTV have established with Guide Dogs Victoria to support blind and visually impaired Victorians?

**Mr WEIMAR** — I would. I would be delighted to talk to you about that. Thank you very much indeed. How much time have we got? Look, I have to say it is a very powerful relationship that we have formed with Guide Dogs Victoria over the last 12 months or so. I am incredibly proud of people in our organisation who have really forged that relationship. What we started to do with Guide Dogs Victoria is we recognised when we came together that one of our biggest challenges is: how do we develop a public transport network that is genuinely accessible to all members of the community? We know it is a mature network. We know it has significant physical barriers in place in terms of step heights of trams and trains and buses et cetera, but it is also about how we train our staff and our operator staff to understand the needs of people who face different barriers to transport use.

So what we could do with Guide Dogs Victoria is bringing all the people in PTV, bringing people in other parts, our operators, through a whole series of practical experiences about what it is like to live with vision impairment, and I have done it myself. You go out for half a day with a whole range of vision impairments, with physical impairments — you may have done it yourself — and the way it changes your perceptions as to how the transport network operates is phenomenal, because you suddenly perceive it from a completely different way.

We have followed that through by then saying, ‘What physical and practical works can we do on our network that start to deal with those really big contact points?’. That is partly about physical infrastructure works, but it is also about changing the attitudes of the frontline staff we have and about how to help people. So the communication access symbol we introduced on V/Line — we are now rolling out to Metro, into Yarra Trams — has been hugely powerful in improving our communication skills of our frontline staff, and that is a real accessibility point for everybody.

We are raising public awareness through Guide Dogs Victoria. We wrap the tram with a Guide Dogs Victoria logo. We had White Cane Day exactly a year ago. We had a White Cane celebration last week at PTV, where we saw around 30 young people with vision impairment travelling on the public transport network, with support, for the first time, because public transport is a liberator to people. They cannot drive, and we allow them to make their journeys and to do this in a safe and effective manner.

Finally, we are really excited. We have got another exciting partnership with Guide Dogs Victoria, where we are promoting one of their major centrepieces for next year in terms of Dialogue in the Dark. We will have a centrepiece there with one of our trams. I do not want to be a complete spoiler around it, but it will be a fantastic investment around how we can all start to experience what it is like to live with vision impairment. What is important for us about why we want to be part of it is because public transport is a daily part of people’s lives. It is not something you do when you are on holidays. It is not something you do when it is special. It is something which is a daily practical experience. So it has been fantastic.

The last thing I will say is PTV, with Karen at Guide Dogs Victoria, have adopted a puppy. That may seem like a bit of fun, but actually it is another one of those pieces where you are grabbing people's hearts and minds, because you are actually bringing the experience of the puppy into our building and bringing it to our people and saying, 'This is real. This is how people move around our network, and we need to understand that, breathe it, believe it and do something about it'.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — On behalf of Guide Dogs Victoria I want to thank PTV for the work they are doing.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Thank you very much indeed. I appreciate that.

**The CHAIR** — I think on that very positive note I thank Mr Weimar for his attendance today and the evidence he has provided. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of evidence for proofreading, and that will ultimately make its way to the committee's website. Once again thank you for your attendance today.

**Mr WEIMAR** — Thank you very much indeed.

**Committee adjourned.**