



TABLE TALK

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President's Obama's railway vision - page 6

About *Table Talk*

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TOP TABLE TALK

ON GROWTH OR NOT?

Geoff Lambert applies his scepticism to some recent publicity

On the weekend of 19/20 April 2009, *The Australian* newspaper published a six-page Special Report on Railways entitled On Growth Track. This report comes only a few months after a similar one. Their publication certainly gives the impression that rail is going somewhere. The report begins with the statement "*Australia's rail story is now one of two steps forward, one step back- an awful lot better than the situation 10 years ago of two steps backward for every advance.* Perhaps - but I wonder.

The Report covers general and bulk freight transport, urban transport and (a little) interurban passenger transport. Its main thrust is that the massive infrastructure investment taking place or promised will produce bigger and better rail service. The sceptic in me asks, "Is this going to work, or will it be another dot.com bust?" The timetable collector in me asks "What is it going to mean for timetables?" On the strength of the evidence so far, the answer is "not much". We have had several new "passing lanes" in southern NSW and several extended loops in northern NSW for a year now, but the Working Timetables show little or no evidence of this. The passing lanes don't even rate a mention, the crossing times are as long as ever, and the number and speed of trains does not seem to have increased. Part of the problem here is that line capacity is constrained by the presence of just one bottleneck. Every single bottleneck needs to be opened up before we see results.

Brisbane-Perth Freight corridor. This is ARTC's domain. The traffic is almost exclusively general freight and intermodal. ARTC carried out an analysis of this traffic and of the wants of the train operating companies and came up with an infrastructure plan to reduce delays, increase train length and allow a greater number of services. In "improving services" it was strongly influenced by the preference of the operators for overnight delivery between the major adjacent nodes and was thus forced to cater for "fleeting" of trains. This sort of timetable requires much more elaborate infrastructure than a regular interval timetable. What happens when the two fleets meet between nodes, at places where there is almost always single track?

One possible problem with ARTC's approach is that it is now two steps removed from the ultimate customer. The inter-positioning of the freight forwarders and the train operating companies between ARTC and users may have diluted or distorted what the customers say they want.

It is hard to see how the ARTC is going to get a return on its investment if all that investment does is marginally decrease the travel times of existing trains. The train operating companies will save fuel and wages but ARTC might not be brave enough to hike its charges to grab a share of this.

ARTC's other stated aim is to increase its market share, acknowledged to be abysmally low, except across the Nullarbor. Grabbing a bigger share of an expanding market might just have given ARTC a return on its investment - especially if it could dissuade operators from the "fleeting" mind-set. But today we have a shrinking market and road competitors are going to be keener than ever to hoard what they've got.

Freight elsewhere. Outside of ARTC and bulk, rail freight is a basket case everywhere. The *Australian's* supplement illustrates why, with a very good story on the situation in Tasmania.

Urban passenger. The sub-editors gave this part of the supplement the headline "*Pundits wrong, and we flock to trains*". I rather think this was not what the author of the story, John Hoyle, would have written himself. Hoyle points out that urban rail travel is indeed increasing, but cautions that no system is really coping with this increase. Anyway, taking a historical perspective on this enables one to see that this recent increase has, in most instances, yet to return urban rail transport to the intensity seen half a century ago. This lack of coping, then, can hardly be due to infrastructure inadequacy. It must be something else and today's infrastructure expansion can hardly be expected to cure it.

Rural/Interurban rail. Here we really are in the situation of "one step forward, five steps back". Only Victoria is making an effort and it is an exemplary one. The Supplement is dead right on this. The other states aren't even the slightest bit interested. Don't expect to see any new rural or Intercity trains in the timetables of the near future - if ever.

The proof of the pudding, as ever, will be in the eating, but the portions that have emerged from the oven so far have not proved appetizing. We don't want rail to do a complete flip from mendicant to spendthrift. We at least can comfort ourselves that some of the worst excesses in rail infrastructure have to be run past the eagle eye of Infrastructure Australia and, to their credit, they seem to be putting the kybosh on the worst excesses. NSW, for instance, withdrew its proposal to shunt Western Line suburban trains into and out of Central because no viable timetable could eventuate from it and because passengers would refuse to use the trains because of the need to change modes.

NEWS

RAIL & TRAM

GSR timetable 1 April 09

In addition to the web timetable of 1 April mentioned in last month's *Table Talk*, GSR has issued a hard copy timetable valid from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 for the Ghan, Indian Pacific and Overland.

ARTC WTT 3 May 09

New Working Timetables effective 3 May 2009 for ARTC's NSW lines were released on 10 April and are available on their web site. The new timetables still take no account of the extended passing lanes now in use between Junee and Albury. Nor are there any changes to Countrylink services between Canberra and Sydney, notwithstanding that these were the subject of discussions with operating staff a couple of months ago.

ARTC Victorian NE

Conversion of the Victorian northeast line from Seymour to Wodonga from broad to standard gauge and duplication is proceeding rapidly. Conversion started at Wodonga and worked south. The line is now converted, but much other work remains – mainly signaling, new platforms at stations and the Wodonga bypass line.

ARTC Dry Creek-Outer Harbor line

Bishop Loop, between Dry Creek and Outer Harbor in Adelaide opened on 1 April. It is named after George Bishop, a long time train controller.

QR Tilt Train cancelled

QR's diesel Cairns Tilt Train service was cancelled on 10 April until further notice.

QR Passenger Executive General Manager Paul Scurrah said he had cancelled the service on receipt of information provided by the Rail Safety Regulator. "Following the collision between the Cairns Tilt Train and a B-double truck at Rungoo on 27 November 2008, a full independent investigation into the circumstances of the accident was instigated by QR and the Rail Safety Regulator. While that investigation is still ongoing, preliminary information has raised issues concerning the specification, design and subsequent testing and construction of the Cairns Tilt Train. We have commenced work immediately with our technical and engineering experts to provide assurances to the integrity of design and construction. We have acted on the side of caution and cancelled services until the nature of the issues raised can be addressed."

Since the collision, the Cairns Tilt Train had been running only twice weekly, because one set was damaged. In the first week after cancellation, a scratch locomotive-hauled replacement train departed Brisbane at 1825 on Friday 17 April, returning from Cairns at 0915 on Sunday 19 April. It is not known if this will continue. The regular thrice weekly locomotive-hauled service also operates.

QR expands

QR has leased the Glenlee line south west of Campbelltown in NSW for container train marshalling. The former coal traffic from the mine at the end of the 2 km branch has dwindled to such an extent that it is now transported to Port Kembla by truck.

QR contracts

The Thallon-Dirranbandi line in SW Queensland (63 km) will close, following agreement that the state government will provide \$14 m to the local shire to seal the parallel road. Grain trains only operate as far as Thallon. Beyond there is currently only two freight trains a week.

Sugar haulage from Marian to Mackay Harbour has been transferred from rail to road. Mackay Sugar states that they could not afford QR charges. This was the only traffic on the 23 km Mackay-Marian (née Netherdale) line.

QR stands still

Due to a downturn in demand for export coal, caused by the global economic recession, construction of the 69 km Goonyella to Newlands northern "missing link" has been deferred for at least a year. Whereas the line was originally planned to relieve overcrowding at Dalrymple Bay coal export port, coal companies now state that forecast demand is 90% less and can be adequately handled there.

QR Traveltrain timetable 5 April 09

QR Traveltrain has issued a new timetable effective from 5 April 2009.

NSW North Coast floods

What were described as "once in a 100 years" floods affected the NSW North Coast in March/April. Both the Railway between Kempsey and Casino and the nearby Pacific Highway were closed. On 31 March, 1 and 2 April XPTs generally terminated and commenced from either Kempsey or Taree, usually with no substitute bus possible beyond to the north.

Newcastle CityRail

It is claimed that planned changes in the CityRail timetable to be introduced in late 2009 will better integrate Newcastle-Sydney services with the Hunter Line. Plans will also reduce journey times for express services with fewer under-utilised stops, and evening peak departure times adjusted to suit demand. The last weeknight Newcastle-Sydney train will change from 2106 to 2140.

Sydney Metro plan hits the buffer

by Linton Besser, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 April, 2009

The viability of the \$4.8 billion CBD Metro is in doubt after the State Government discovered radical changes needed at Central Station to underpin the project are physically impossible. The metro was predicated on a plan to terminate all western suburbs train services at Central, forcing

up to 30,000 people an hour to change to the metro to get into the CBD. But this plan, drafted by the Sydney Metro Authority, has been withdrawn and is being revised, the *Herald* has learned, six months after the Premier, Nathan Rees, announced the ambitious project. "It had the potential to bring the whole project crashing down on its head," a senior source said. "[But] they are under pressure, and their first priority is to dig holes by March 2011," when the state election is due.

Originally the metro was seen as a way to ease chronic overcrowding on western suburbs CityRail services by utilising the mostly empty country platforms at Central for these trains, instead of having them continue through the city and over the Harbour Bridge.

Under the plan, at least 26 trains an hour in the peak would shift to the country tracks and terminate at Central. Passengers would be forced to change to empty metro carriages at a new station beneath Central's western forecourt. But senior government officials have realised it is impossible to terminate so many trains hourly at Central because there is no way to get a sufficient number of trains back out of the station in time. Sources have told the *Herald* that this plan to change the CityRail network, originally submitted to Infrastructure Australia, has been withdrawn and is being revised.

Alec Brown, a spokesman for the Sydney Metro Authority, said: "It is normal in these kinds of circumstances for a proposal to be altered or revised during ongoing discussions between agencies, to get the best outcome for commuters. The metro system and heavy rail will be compatible at the opening of the CBD Metro in 2015."

But if these western line trains do not terminate at Central and continue on to the North Shore, as they do now, via Town Hall and Wynyard, so few people are likely to use the CBD Metro that it will be an outright failure. In that scenario, there will be no reason for passengers to change to the metro because their trains already travel to their final destination stations in the northern parts of the city.

At Central, the first problem is that three of the 15 platforms have to be quarantined for country trains, which are too long to terminate anywhere else on the network. For 26 trains an hour to use the other 12 platforms, at least 14 trains an hour must move out of their way. And because there is just a single pair of tracks returning west, these 14 trains have to cross the flow of the 26 trains entering the yard - a task which RailCorp bureaucrats have acknowledged is unattainable. "It is virtually impossible to manage that level of frequency at a terminal station," one insider said.

The plan faces other huge challenges. A big railway flyover at Blacktown would have to be remodelled at enormous cost to allow Richmond line trains access to the country tracks that terminate at Central. Similarly, a vital track junction at Strathfield would have to be overhauled, which could have severe effects on Strathfield station. And new automated signalling systems, not yet in use anywhere in the CityRail system, would be required between Strathfield and Chatswood and between Parramatta and Central Station - almost a quarter of Sydney's entire network. Experts put the cost of this resignalling at more than \$2 billion and say the concept is unproved on the scale required in Sydney.

Victorian freight doubt

A collapse in contract negotiations between Pacific National and logging company Midway threatens to all but close North Geelong's freight rail depot, which supports a log train to Bairnsdale. PN confirmed there was a stand-off over conditions for an upcoming five-year contract.

There are also doubts about the viability of Blue Circle's Waurin Ponds to Lyndhurst cement train line. Blue Circle temporarily ceased rail transport in April because of an increase in rail freight costs. Each 500-tonne train was replaced by 11 or 12 B-double truck movements. Blue Circle says it will continue to work with PN to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of rail freight for cement in the long term.

PN says that falling trade and operational losses have prompted possible closure of North Geelong depot. PN is reviewing its options and will work with employees to determine their future and the future of the depot. PN is hopeful Midway will resume negotiations, but at present there is no indication of an agreement.

V Line's Geelong trains from the *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 March 2009

V Line is warning passengers on its overcrowded peak services between Geelong and Melbourne the trains can't get any longer. V Line spokesman Daniel Moloney said while recent

measures to lengthen platforms at several stations had increased trains' capacity to carry up to seven carriages, they were stretched to the limit and further expansion was not an option. "They're as long as they can be," Mr Moloney said. "There's only so long you can make the platforms due to infrastructure issues." V Line trains on the Geelong-Melbourne line are now the longest in the state, with platforms at Marshall, South Geelong and North Melbourne extended to fit seven carriages and seat about 500 passengers. But Mr Moloney said the line remained among the state's most overcrowded. He said V Line would ask passengers to consider switching to alternate trains in a bid to ease congestion at peak times. "This year we'll continue to encourage people to move on to different services," he said. "It might mean their train arrives 15 minutes later, but they'll get a seat." Public Transport Users Association Geelong Branch convenor Paul Westcott said running more frequent trains was the only answer. "You have to run more services ... if you can't extend the platforms any further, that's the only other solution you can bring to bear," Mr Westcott said. "We think it (the line) could certainly support a half-hourly service during the day, and during peak times, they've got to be more often than every 20 minutes." The Geelong-Melbourne line receives one extra carriage each month.

Melbourne weekend timetable

The Melbourne *Herald-Sun* reports that the contract for operation of the Melbourne suburban network is likely to include scrapping the existing Sunday timetable in favour of a combined weekend timetable.

TransPerth 1 March 09

New public timetable brochures for all lines were issued valid from 1 March 2009. Copies are available from the AATTC's April Distribution List.

BHP Billiton duplication

BHP Billiton's Newman/Yandi iron ore line in the Pilbara is being duplicated for 220 km from Port Hedland to Shaw Siding.

New Zealand Train Plans

The current NZ Train Plans (ie, abbreviated equivalents of Working Timetables) are:

- Veolia Auckland: no. 7.7 of 19 Oct 2008
- Tranz Metro and Kiwi Rail Wellington: no. 3 of 30 Nov 2008
- Kiwi Rail North Island: 15 March 2009
- Kiwi Rail South Island: 1 Feb 2009.

Copies are available from the AATTC May Distribution List.

Amtrak & VIA

A new Amtrak timetable will be introduced from 11 May. However, the Public timetable book will not include schedules for the important North East Corridor. This is because beginning 20 April and continuing until September, Amtrak will carry out an extensive track maintenance project that will result in delays to all trains on the Corridor. During the project, all southbound trains will depart New York on their present schedules, but will arrive in Washington at a later time than currently scheduled. Similarly, all northbound trains will depart Washington on their present schedules but will arrive in New York later than currently scheduled.

VIA Canada introduced minor alterations to services in the Québec-Ontario corridor from 1 May.

US High-Speed

Our front cover shows a map released by President Obama on 16 April 2009 of his plan for high-speed rail in America. He said:

"What we need is a smart transportation system equal to the needs of the 21st century. A system that reduces travel times and increases mobility. A system that reduces congestion and boosts productivity. A system that reduces destructive emissions and creates jobs.

What we're talking about is a vision for high-speed rail in America. Imagine boarding a train in the center of a city. No racing to an airport and across a terminal, no delays, no sitting on the tarmac, no lost luggage, no taking off your shoes. Imagine whisking through towns at speeds over 100 miles an hour, walking only a few steps to public transportation, and ending up just blocks from your destination. Imagine what a great project that would be to rebuild America.

Now, all of you know this is not some fanciful, pie-in-the-sky vision of the future. It is now. It is happening right now. It's been happening for decades. The problem is it's been happening elsewhere, not here.

In France, high-speed rail has pulled regions from isolation, ignited growth, remade quiet towns into thriving tourist destinations. In Spain, a high-speed line between Madrid and Seville is so successful that more people travel between those cities by rail than by car and airplane combined. China, where service began just two years ago, may have more miles of high-speed rail service than any other country just five years from now. And Japan, the nation that unveiled the first high-speed rail system, is already at work building the next: a line that will connect Tokyo with Osaka at speeds of over 300 miles per hour. So it's being done; it's just not being done here.

There's no reason why we can't do this. This is America. There's no reason why the future of travel should lie somewhere else beyond our borders. Building a new system of high-speed rail in America will be faster, cheaper and easier than building more freeways or adding to an already overburdened aviation system — and everybody stands to benefit.

And that's why today, with the help of Secretary LaHood and Vice President Biden, America's number one rail fan, I've been told, I'm announcing my administration's efforts to transform travel in America with an historic investment in high-speed rail.

And our strategy has two parts: improving our existing rail lines to make current train service faster but also identifying potential corridors for the creation of world-class high-speed rail. To make this happen, we've already dedicated \$8 billion of Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to this initiative, and I've requested another \$5 billion over the next five years.

The Department of Transportation expects to begin awarding funds to ready projects before the end of this summer, well ahead of schedule. And like all funding decisions under the Recovery Act, money will be distributed based on merit -- not on politics, not as favors, not for any other consideration --purely on merit.

Now, this plan is realistic. And the first round of funding will focus on projects that can create jobs and benefits in the near term. We're not talking about starting from scratch, we're talking about using existing infrastructure to increase speeds on some routes from 70 miles an hour to over 100 miles per hour -- so you're taking existing rail lines, you're upgrading them. And many corridors merit even faster service, but this is the first step that is quickly achievable, and it will create jobs improving tracks, crossings, signal systems.

The next step is investing in high-speed rail that unleashes the economic potential of all our regions by shrinking distances within our regions. There are at least 10 major corridors in the United States of 100 to 600 miles in length with the potential for successful high-speed rail systems. And these areas have explored its potential impact on their long-term growth and competitiveness, and they've already presented sound plans. I want to be clear: No decision about where to allocate funds has yet been made, and any region can step up, present a plan and be considered.

The high-speed rail corridors we've identified so far would connect areas like the cities of the Pacific Northwest; southern and central Florida; the Gulf Coast to the Southeast to our nation's capital; the breadth of Pennsylvania and New York to the cities of New England; and something close to my heart, a central hub network that draws the cities of our industrial heartland closer to Chicago and one another.

Or California, where voters have already chosen to move forward with their own high-speed rail system, a system of new stations and 220 mile-per-hour trains that links big cities to inland towns; that alleviates crippling congestion on highways and at airports; and that makes travel from San Francisco to Los Angeles possible in two and a half hours.

And by making investments across the country, we'll lay a new foundation for our economic competitiveness and contribute to smart urban and rural growth. We'll create highly-skilled construction and operating jobs that can't be outsourced, and generate demand for technology that gives a new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs the opportunity to step up and lead the way in the 21st century. We'll move to cleaner energy and a cleaner environment, we'll reduce our need for foreign oil by millions of barrels a year, and eliminate more than 6 billion pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually — equal to removing 1 million cars from our roads.

Now, I know that this vision has its critics. There are those who say high-speed rail is a fantasy -- but its success around the world says otherwise. I know Americans love their cars, and nobody is talking about replacing the automobile and our highways as critical parts of our transportation system. We are upgrading those in the Recovery Package, as well. But this is something that can be done, has been done, and can provide us enormous benefits.

Now, there are those who argue that if an investment doesn't directly benefit the people of their district, then it shouldn't be made. But if we followed that rationale, we'd have no infrastructure at all.

There are those who say, well, this investment is too small. But this is just a first step. We know that this is going to be a long-term project. But us getting started now, us moving the process forward and getting people to imagine what's possible, and putting resources behind it so that people can start seeing examples of this around the country, that's going to spur all kinds of activity.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Dennis McLean, Barack Obama, Len Regan, Roger Wheaton and *Railway Digest* for Rail news.

BUS NEWS

New South Wales – Sydney

Sydney Buses: Further to the Eastern Region changes previously mentioned, new timetables dated 26 April 2009 have been issued for most routes. The new Region Guide is also in print. Route 348 Bondi Junction to Alexandria, previously operating in peak hours only, is now an all day service Mon – Fri and has been extended to Wollri Creek Station at the western end.

There were local concerns expressed regarding the withdrawal of Route 311 services in the back streets of the Elizabeth Bay area after running for almost 80 years. (Editor's note: Having ridden on this route, I wonder how the manual gearbox vehicles and drivers coped with the steep hills in past years).

University Shuttle: The shuttle service from Redfern Station to UNSW will continue until further notice. The timetable has been amended to include Fridays and the pick-up point moved to Lawson Street opposite the Redfern Police Station. Following staff usage and requests, the timetable has been adjusted with departures now at 0730, 0745, 0755, 0800, 0805, 0815, 0825, 0835, 0845 and 0900.

New South Wales – Regional

PBC Goulburn which recently took over the Bowmans routes in Goulburn now has a new website <http://www.pbcgoulburn.com.au/> which advertises that a new timetable is being introduced on 30/3/2009 with a new route structure:

Route 821A Goulburn to Kenmore (anti-clockwise loop) via North Goulburn, Bradfordville, Marys Mount and Ifield

Route 821B Kenmore to Goulburn (clockwise loop) via Ifield, Marys Mount, Bradfordville and North Goulburn

Route 823 Goulburn to West Goulburn (loop) via Clinton Villas and South Goulburn

Route 825 Goulburn to Eastgrove (loop) via North Goulburn.

Blue Mountains Bus Co: There were some route changes commencing 23rd February 2009. Details of these changes are contained in a double sided A4 sheet as a supplement to Mid Mountains and Upper Mountains timetables with replacement weekday timetables Routes 685, 690 Springwood to Hazelbrook and Springwood to Lawson & Katoomba and for route 685 Hazelbrook to North Hazelbrook and return (They still have these confusing two routes 685.)

Busways Grafton has issued new timetables dated 30 March 2009.

Kennedy's Bus Service, Nowra: New timetables dated 6 April 2009 have been issued for routes 728, 729, 809 & 810. Route 729 is a route acquired from Culburra Coaches last year.

Wollongong Shuttle: NSW Transport Ministry figures show that patronage levels are 5000 on weekdays and between 2000 and 3000 on Saturdays and Sundays.

Northern Territory - Darwin

New Routes 14 and 14A will connect the City with Cullen Bay, Bayview, Tipperary Waters and Waterfront precinct. The new Route 14 will link with the ferry service to the Cox Peninsula, allowing commuters easier access to the city.

Queensland – Brisbane

Translink Southern Region: From Monday, 27 April 2009 TransLink is investing an additional \$1.5 million per year to improve bus services in the Southern Region. These improvements will make public transport easier to catch in Logan and surrounds, with more frequent services and greater travel options. There are 151 additional services each week - 15 additional weekday peak services and 76 additional weekend services. These provide capacity for an additional 1,000 passengers on weekdays and 5,000 additional passengers on weekends.

555 Loganholme to Brisbane City Weekend services doubled to operate every 15 minutes between 8am and 5pm. Additional weekday morning peak trip.

573 Loganholme to Brisbane City Additional morning and afternoon peak trip.

551 Crestmead to Brisbane City Additional morning peak trip. Timetable adjusted to operate at 15 minute frequency and run in conjunction with 561 service.

561 Crestmead to Brisbane City Additional morning and afternoon peak trip. Route extended to provide more travel options for commuters.

577 Springwood to Brisbane City and 579 Springwood to Brisbane City Two additional morning and afternoon peak trips to provide 15 minute service frequency

Timetables for all services have been adjusted to incorporate additional services and improve service reliability.

Queensland – Regional

Toowoomba: Kynoch Coaches and Sunbus Toowoomba have been sold to the Pulitano Group and will be merged and renamed Bus Queensland Toowoomba. There are no changes in services at present.

Sunbus Townsville: Additional peak hour Ferry Link services between City Mall and Breakwater Ferry Terminal were introduced as from 6 April. These complement the existing route 1A services.

South Australia

Oakbank Races: A major event in the racing and social calendar of South Australia. Special express bus services are operated by Transit Plus the operator of Adelaidemetro services in the area at special fares. Buses leave 101 Franklin Street in the City between 8.45am and 11am and return from the course between 3.30 and 5.30pm. Prepayment of fares, including racecourse entry charges, suggested with credit card facilities available at the Aldgate Depot.

Work on the Belair railway line refurbishment commenced on Sunday 26 April and is expected to be finished in August. A replacement bus service will operate as route number B1 along the Belair line from the City to Belair, for the duration of the closure, operating approximately every 15 minutes in peak times and approximately every 30 minutes at all other times. A printed timetable has been issued. Full details also available on the Adelaidemetro website.

Free travel for Seniors will benefit about 275,000 Seniors Card Holders and will cost an estimated \$10million a year. Seniors Card Holders will be entitled to travel free on trams, trains and buses on Adelaidemetro services between 0930 and 1500 on weekdays and all day on weekends and public holidays from 1 July. The current concession fares for travel at peak hours will be retained.

Victoria – Melbourne

Recent timetable issues: Routes 270/271 Box Hill – Ringwood, 366 & 367 Ringwood – Croydon all effective from 27 April 2009.

Route 551 Heidelberg – Latrobe University 9 March 2009.

Route 575 Epping North - Thomastown: New timetable from 23 March 2009. An additional bus has been provided to improve the service from one bus every 60 minutes to one bus every 30-40 minutes. Service will also operate until c2100 seven days a week, including public holidays.

Route 630 Elwood – Monash University: A new timetable commenced on 20 April with changes on weekdays only. Additional running time has been provided to alleviate late running in peak hours.

Route 670 Ringwood – Lilydale and 691 Boronia – Waverley Gardens: Improved weekday services from 26 April. Frequencies increased from 30 to 20 Minutes with 15 minute peaks on 670.

Route 706 Mordialloc – Chelsea: Not a new route, but regains its former route number. Recently operated as an extension of Route 700, but now a separate route since the introduction of the 903 Smartbus route. There are again only the three return trips. This was a route at one time operated by Beach Transport, a subsidiary of Ventura, as a full time service.

New Orbital Routes: Route 903 Altona – Mordialloc: The printed timetable is now available. It divides the 86 kilometre route into three segments (Altona to Heidelberg Stn, Heidelberg Stn to Chadstone SC and Chadstone SC to Mordialloc). Unfortunately, the 80 page timetable has a number of typesetting errors with columns and times misplaced. Sunday afternoon times may also be incorrect as 30 minute running times from Box Hill to Burwood Highway are shown compared with 20 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays. Free travel was allowed for the first two weeks of operation.

Route 902 “Green Orbital” Chelsea to Werribee via Eltham, Broadmeadows and Sydenham. Work has commenced on planning and infrastructure for this route, which will be considerably longer than Route 903.

National Bus: 293 – April 2009 (TT 12 v.1 Apr 09). Replaces previous 291/293 timetable.

Ivanhoe: 550 – 2 March 2009 (v.1 Mar 09)

Eastrans: 630 – 20 April 2009 (v.1 Apr 09)

Ventura:

270/271 – April 2009 (TT7 v.3 Apr 09)

366 – April 2009 (TT19 v.1 Apr 09)

367 – April 2009 (TT20 – v.1 Apr 09)

701/704 – April 2009 (TT34 v.1 Apr 09)

703 – April 2009 (TT27 v.1 Mar 09)

706 – April 2009 (v.1 Apr 09). No timetable no. shown.

733 – April 2009 (TT28 – v.1 Mar 09)

736 – November 2008 (TT36 v.1 Apr 09)

737 – November 2008 (TT22 v.2 Mar 09)

740/765 – November 2008 (TT37 v.1 Mar 09)

742 – 9 November 2008 (TT29 v.2 Jan 09)

766 – April 2009 (TT35 v.1 Mar 09)

767 – April 2009 (TT25 v.1 Mar 09)

Although operated by Ventura, the 270/271, 366 & 367 timetables still show National Bus on the cover, and are effective from 27 April.

The 701/704, 703, 706, 733, 766 & 767 timetables are all effective from 20 April.

Victoria – Regional

What is a V Line bus?

Further to discussion about what constitutes a V Line bus (see *Table Talk* June 2008, page 14), availability of the Victorian Fares Manual of January 2008 from the April AATTC Distribution List has further muddied the definition. This edition of the Manual includes a new map of V Line services which is geographically correct and is a big improvement on the “straight lines” version in the prior edition. This map does **not** include the Eildon-Melbourne bus service, one of the ambiguous services referred to the June 2008 *Table Talk* article. However, Eildon and intermediate towns **are** included in the V Line fares table. So, the ambiguity about this service continues. However, there is another service, not mentioned in the June 2008 article, now to be placed in the ambiguous category. The Genoa-Mallacota bus definitely appears in V Line timetables. But, we now discover that in the new Fares Manual, it does not appear, neither in the V Line map nor in the V Line fares table.

Ballarat: Additional morning services were provided from 30 March on five routes (Brown Hill, Canadian, Delacombe, Eureka, Invermay, Wendouree and Wendouree West) connecting with morning peak V/Line train services to Melbourne. Regular 30 minute daytime weekday

frequencies have also been implemented on some routes (eg., Routes 10 and 12). Since the upgraded Ballarat Transit services were introduced last year, patronage across the network has increased by 6%.

Geelong area: A new shuttle bus service was introduced between the Torquay/Jan Juc area and Marshall Station on 20 April 2009. A Park and Ride facility has been established at the Spring Creek Reserve at Torquay. The two morning trips depart Jan Juc at 0610 and 0635 connecting into trains from Marshall to Melbourne. There are three afternoon trips connecting from trains. The service was free for the first week and is on a six month trial.

Also from 20 April, an additional 0610 trip from St Leonards to Geelong Station (arrive 0745) was introduced.

Hamilton: Minister of Transport Lynne Kosky has announced that the Town Bus Service will remain unchanged following a review and community consultation. Passenger numbers have increased over recent months following several months of low patronage. The service operates between 0800 and 1800 Mon-Fri and 0830 to 1300 Sats over three routes.

Community Buses: Trial services are to be introduced in the Loddon Shire from Boort to Bendigo on Saturdays, Tarnagulla to Inglewood on Thursdays and Tarnagulla to Maryborough on Fridays.

A service from Hamilton via Casterton to Mount Gambier on Wednesdays and Fridays commenced on 8 April 2009. The trial service will run until June 2010 and will supplement the V/Line service, allowing more time in Mount Gambier.

Thanks to Barry Blair, *Casterton News*, Dept of Transport Victoria, Adrian Dessanti, Neville Fenn, Matty G, *Geelong Advertiser*, Alan Gray, Craig Halsall, Robert Henderson, *Illawarra Mercury*, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, John Mann, Michael Marshall, Roger Wheaton, Bob Wilson, *Toowoomba Chronicle*,

AIR NEWS

International

For pdf downloads of **JAL Japan Airlines** timetables go to www.jal.co.jp/en/inter/time/

On 1 April **Air New Zealand** cancelled 25 regional services a week allegedly because of changes to employment conditions which meant air traffic control tower staff take scheduled lunch breaks rather than flexible breaks. Services to Gisborne, Napier, New Plymouth, Rotorua and Invercargill were cancelled.

With the end of Daylight Saving in Eastern Australia from 5 April, **China Southern** is operating five non-stop flights per week from Sydney to Guangzhou, and two weekly non-stop flights from Melbourne-Guangzhou.

Garuda Indonesia is pulling out of the NT after nearly 30 years. Its last flight left Darwin for Bali on 13 April. A thrice-weekly direct service between Darwin and Jakarta is also unlikely to go ahead. AirNorth dropped its Darwin-Bali service last year after saying that the market was flooded. Australian budget outfit Jetstar will now be the only airline flying the route.

Cathay Pacific will cut one of its daily flights to Sydney. The first three months of 2009 have seen a "marked deterioration" over last year with turnover sliding 22.4%. In addition to the Sydney reduction, capacity will be cut on all major routes including London, Singapore and Bangkok.

Etihad introduced non-stop Melbourne-Abu Dhabi flights from 30 March.

Virgin Blue will fly from Sydney and Melbourne to Denpasar from June.

V Australia introduced thrice-weekly Brisbane – Los Angeles flights from 6 April.

Domestic

On 15 April **Qantas** announced major economies because of the downturn in traffic caused by the global financial crisis, especially to business travel. 1750 staff will be retrenched (in addition to 1000 retrenchments last year), up to ten planes grounded, four Airbus A380s and 12 B737s on order deferred and a 5% decrease in scheduled flights.

Tiger Airways will commence Melbourne-Sydney flights from 3 July.

Adding to April *Table Talk*: **SkyAirWorld** won the contract to operate to Cocos and Christmas Islands, but collapsed before taking up the routes.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Victor Isaacs and Tris Tottenham for Air news.

FERRY NEWS

Sydney Ferries is spending \$13 million to update Sydney Ferries' information services by installing satellite-tracking technology on all vessels. Thales Australia is contracted to install a multifaceted information and timetabling service, Ferry Operations and Customer Information System (FOCIS). This will provide LCD display boards on all wharfs and ferries, GPS tracking of all vessels, allowing for the most updated information on running times and delays and the ability to send this information to passengers' mobile phones via an SMS message alert. The system will also allow Sydney Ferries to gather more precise patronage figures. The lack of such data, and information generally, was one of the criticisms levelled at the corporation by the Walker Report. Work on the system's infrastructure will begin immediately but the actual service will be delivered in stages, starting in February 2010 and completed in September 2010.

Captain Cook Cruises new brochures:

- Cruises Sydney Harbour/Ferries Sydney Harbour. Effective April 2009. All references to the Sydney Harbour Explorer and the Rocket Express have been deleted and replaced by a reference to Harbour Express. Also some major changes in the layout.
- Harbour Express. Dated April 2009. No mention of Matilda Cruises.

Thanks to Geoff Lambert and Lourie Smit for Ferry news.