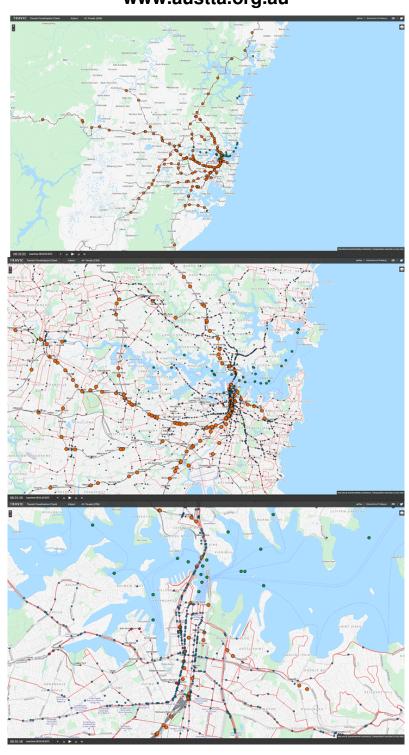


# TABLE TALK

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**FOLLOW PUBLIC TRANSPORT LIVE ON THE WEB – PAGE 2** 

# TOP TABLE TALK – ALL THE WORLD'S TRANSIT TIMETABLES AND MAPS IN YOUR POCKET

by Geoff Lambert

Our front cover shows some stills from a moving map of Sydney's transport status at 0830 on the morning of Thursday 11 June 2015. Melbourne at the same time is on our back cover. The trains, trams, buses and ferries are shown in the positions they are timetabled to be in at this hour – this is not a real-time moving map. These maps come from TRAVIC, one of a number of web-sites, developed to collate GTFS timetable data from across the planet.

GTFS (General Transit Feed System) is a world-wide standard, developed by Google (the "G" originally meant "Google") in association with the Trimet Transit Authority in Oregon, to standardize the presentation of transit data. GTFS is a plain text – based feed. There are a number of other standards, including TransXchange, which is XML-based. The number of GTFS feeds has now reached more than 1,000. These standard forms of data are now mostly used by app developers for use on mobile phone timetable apps, but some software developers have created web-sites which collate GTFS data. Most of these merely collate data or offer a hyperlink (e.g. http://www.gtfs-data-

exchange.com/agencies), but a few (e.g. www.transitfeeds.com) allow the data to be examined in depth and thus form, essentially, a self-contained

standardised world-wide Public Transport Timetable site. They can, of course, be accessed from a mobile phone also. Many transit agencies can supply real-time equivalents, but access to these is usually restricted to app developers by contract – Netherlands Railways is about the only Agency that makes its real-time feed freely available.

GTFS is a traveller-oriented and app developer-oriented product, but some sites, such as TRAVIC (http://tracker.geops.ch) have massaged GTFS feeds to produce visualisations of the movement of every public transport vehicle on the planet simultaneously. TRAVIC is thus a product for the rubber-necker, aka "Timetable Collector". It is of no use whatever to the world's 7 billion travellers. As entertainment for them, it equates to the moving maps one stares at mindlessly on a long Trans-Pacific flight. As a tool for by transport planners – or even timetable collectors – it offers the direct transfer of knowledge into the right side of the brain – much as a graphical timetable does.

ATA has illustrated and/or given the web addresses of a number of these sites in *Table Talk* and the *Times* over the past few years. London was described in some detail last year.

### **RAIL AND TRAM NEWS**

#### **Northern Australia**

On 18 June the Prime Minister released the Federal government's White Paper on *Developing Northern Australia: Our North, Our Future.* Among an array of various proposals there was the usual eye-watering amounts of proposed expenditure (\$700 million) on roads and a mere pittance to spend on railways, which is characteristic of the present government. There is a suggested \$5 million in rail freight analysis, starting with a pre-feasibility analysis of the Mount Isa to Tennant Creek railway proposal and an upgrade of the Townsville to Mount Isa line.

#### **Queensland Rail: Stabling Program**

Queensland Rail will expend \$116 million to construct new train stabling facilities across the South East. This program is part of the New Generation Rolling Stock project that will add 75 new suburban six-car trains to the Cityrail network, a 30% increase. To accommodate the fleet expansion and improve operational efficiencies, Queensland Rail requires new stabling facilities. These will be built at Banyo (4 x 6 car trains), Elimbah (8 x 6 car trains), and Woombye (4 x 6 car trains) and the existing facility at Robina expanded (additional 4 x 6 car trains). A fifth stabling facility is being constructed at Kippa Ring as part of the Moreton Bay Rail Link project (up to 10 x 6 car trains).

#### **Queensland Rail inner City bustitution**

From 2200 Friday 31 July until the last service Sunday 2 August, tracks will be closed from Roma Street to Corinda, Murarrie and Yeerongpilly stations. Work to be undertaken will be overhead replacement Roma St to Milton, South Brisbane and Normanby, splay and guard rail installation Logan Road and Crown St, points replacement Roma St and track maintenance

#### **Translink App**

Translink, the SE Queensland transport authority, has introduced an app called MyTransLink! providing real time train, bus, ferry and tram information.

#### **NSW Budget**

The New South Welsh Budget presented on 23 June included:

- \$977 million in funding for the Sydney Metro North-West;
- \$84 million to continue planning and development for the second harbour rail crossing as part of Sydney Metro, including a new underground railway station at Barangaroo;
- \$120 million on the CBD and South East Light Rail;
- \$103 million on the Newcastle Light Rail;
- \$99 million for a new fleet of intercity trains to service the Central Coast, Blue Mountains, and Illawarra
- \$316 million to improve access to the public transport network:
- \$99 million to continue implementing the Opal card integrated electronic ticketing system:
- \$36 million for Sydney Rail Future stage 2;
- \$19 million for planning for Paramatta area Light Rail; and
- \$1 million for rail corridor protection.

#### JHR NSW CRN: NW NSW wheat line

From 28 May the wheat country branch from Camurra to Weemelah in the John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network was booked out of service. It will probably be brought back into service for the next wheat harvest.

(JHR NSW CRN SAFE Notice 13-15 refers. Whoever places notices on JHR NSW CRN's website seems to delight in using as many acronyms as possible. In that spirit, the Rail editor hopes he has established a record for the use of acronyms in the heading of this news item.)

#### **ARTC: Hunter Valley closedown**

The latest scheduled closedown of the Hunter Valley network for engineering works was from 16 to 18 June.

#### **ARTC: Port Botany line**

ARTC is seeking Expressions of Interest to deliver Stage 3 of the Port Botany line upgrade. This will improve the track to interstate main line condition, allowing heavier axle loads. Construction is anticipated to commence in September 2015 and take three years.

#### **Moorebank Container Terminal**

The Federal government's Moorebank Intermodal Company (MIC) signed an agreement on 3 May with the Sydney Intermodal Terminal Alliance (SIMTA) for the development of the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal. This will see SIMTA develop and operate an intermodal freight terminal and warehousing across both Commonwealth and SIMTA-owned land at Moorebank, with direct rail access to Port Botany via the Southern Sydney Freight Line. SIMTA is a consortium which represents two of Australia's largest logistics companies, Qube Holdings and Aurizon Holdings. The facility will include an import-export terminal with ultimate capacity to handle up to 1.05 million containers a year and a separate interstate terminal that will ultimately have capacity for up to 500,000 containers a year.

It is hoped that the new terminal will transfer freight from roads onto rail. There will be open access for rail operators and other users of the Moorebank facility to promote competition. Subject to the approvals by the Commonwealth and state planning and environment authorities, work on the project will begin this year and the terminal is planned to be operational from late 2017. Most of the project is not expected to be built until 2019, and is contingent upon demand. Further information about the project can be found at: www.micl.com.au.

#### **Sydney Trains: Cronulla bustitution**

From Saturday 27 June until Sunday 5 July buses will replace trains between Cronulla and Sutherland for "maintenance and upgrading work." On the two weekends the substitution will be all the way to Central.

#### **Sydney Metro**

On 16 June NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance briefed industry executives about the proposed Sydney cross-harbour rail tunnel and new north-south City underground line, now dubbed "Sydney Metro". At least three new stations will be built in the city, at Martin Place, Pitt St near Town Hall, and Central, with the possibility of another station at Barangaroo.

The Sydney Metro, stage 2 under the Harbour and the City, could be opened earlier than the planned 2024, the NSW Premier, Mike Baird, said on 24 June. The NSW budget included a \$590 million down-payment from the proposed \$20 billion privatisation of electricity assets, intended to accelerate the delivery of a number of major projects. Mr Baird, said the money would be used to work out whether it was possible to build projects ahead of their previous schedule. "We want to ensure that we don't wait, that if we have the capacity to bring a project forward two or three years, well let's do it."

Andrew Constance, the NSW Transport Minister has also thrown open the question of where that line will connect south of the Harbour, once it is linked to the existing Bankstown train line. As well as the conversion of the Bankstown line, a second connection south of the Harbour will be feasible because of the capacity of the line, a train every two minutes. A second connection will also be feasible north of the Harbour, and previous planning documents have shown a connection to The Spit has been considered.

Map on page 7.

#### Sydney Harbour cableway?

A cable car across the southern shore of Sydney Harbour has been proposed. It could transport people from Balmain's White Bay through Pyrmont to Barangaroo in less than five minutes. Businesses, including cruise line Carnival Australia and Pyrmont's Star casino owner, Echo Entertainment, have joined the Sydney Business Chamber and Committee for Sydney in calling on the NSW government to seriously consider the project. Under the Harbour Skylink plan, a 3.4km cable system would be built from Rozelle Bay, with stations at the White Bay Power Station, White Bay Cruise Terminal, Pyrmont and Barangaroo. It would take only 4.5 minutes to travel from the cruise terminal to Barangaroo compared to the present travel time of 30 minutes, using high-tech cabins capable of transporting commuters with bicycles and luggage, would be privately funded, but would need access to some government controlled property. About 24,000 people will be working in the three new commercial towers being built at Barangaroo South and the Harbour Skylink team believes a cable car system could be built within 18 months, far more quickly than road and tunnel projects. Committee for Sydney chief executive Tim Williams said the project could be utilised by everyday commuters as well as become as big a tourism drawcard as the Harbour Bridge Climb or the London Eye ferris wheel. "Sydney needs projects as imaginative as this: a project with sky high ambitions for our global city," he said.

#### **NSW & Victoria: Fares information**

The Sydney Trains Fares Manual has been removed from their website. Once again, this shows that provision of website (and print) information is ephemeral.

A new Victorian Fares Manual dated 1 January 2015 is on the Public Transport Victoria website at www.ptv.vic.gov.au/assets/Fares-and-Ticketing-Manual-General\_ONLINE\_2015.pdf

## Metro Trains Melbourne: 21 June timetable

There is only one additional train from Werribee in the morning peak and one additional down train in the evening peak. New public timetable booklets for Metro's Werribee/Williamstown lines, Sunbury line, Pakenham/Cranbourne lines and Frankston line were issued dated 21 June. Copies are available from the ATA's July Distribution List. There will be a new Metro timetable late this year with additional trains promised for the northern and western lines.

#### V/Line Timetables 21 June

The printed public card timetable for the new Geelong line service had some serious errors. In the Weekdays timetable Up services are out of sequence in the late morning / early afternoon, plus the 1212 Up Waurn Ponds and the 1241 Up South Geelong services are shown twice. In the Sundays Up timetable, the 1637 Up Waurn Ponds is not shown at all. The public timetable was reprinted with a print run of 60,000.

Pocket/purse public timetable dated 21 June were issued for all V/Line services.

Some more analysis of the new V/Line timetable additional to the points noted in June *Table Talk*, (page 1):

- V/Line trains no longer take passengers to/from Sunbury and Pakenham. They have to use Metro trains;
- It would appear that not all Geelong trains are DMUs given the timetable allowances for certain services in the peak period, notably the evening Southern Cross departures at 1622, 1715, 1807 and 1932 for Geelong and morning arrivals at Southern Cross at 0635 (ex Marshall), 0713 (ex Marshall), 0725 (ex South Geelong),

0842 (ex Geelong) that have extended running times, similar to Warrnambool trains.

- The new numbers for trains on the Geelong line will be 87xx instead of 82xx, and the Overland SG will be known as 8697/8698
- Some Warrnambool trains as well as now running via the new line via Wyndham Vale have been changed significantly. All weekday up trains from Warrnambool now leave about 40 minutes later: the former 0518 at 0608, the 114 at 1208, the 1714 at 1750, whereas the morning and midday up Saturday trains run earlier, the former 0608 at 0550 and the former 1141 at 1130. The Saturday morning down leaves one hour earlier at 0700.
- All Warrnambool trains now stop at Sherwood Park.
- The 1649 Mon-Fri up ex Ararat has a wait at Ballarat of 20 minutes (1742-1802);
- Trains between Traralgon and Bairnsdale have been speeded up, generally by five minutes;
- Subsequent to the new timetable, a circular slowed Albury trains by five minutes by adding recovery time immediately before the final stations.

V/Line Chief Executive Mark Wild said PTV will monitor patronage and review them in six months "We are committed to a full review," he said. .It may consider improving the hourly service on weekends. Mr Wild said plans to extend the Werribee Metro service yo Wyndham Vale and Tarneit were "a very long-term plan."

V/Line now provides on their website at /www.vline.com.au/home/news/carousel/920317760/Artic le.aspx interesting tables of the capacity of weekday peak trains on the Geelong and Ballarat lines.

# V/Line: Opening of Regional Rail Link stage 2

In connection with the opening of the new railway from Deer Park Junction to Manor Junction (28 km), the following special trains were scheduled:

- Saturday 13 June: VLocity DMUs, Melbourne Southern Cross depart 0840, Tarneit arrive 0925, stand at platform for public inspection, depart 1230, Melb SX arrive 1258;
- Sunday 14 June: VLocity DMUs, Melb SX depart 1105 conveying special Ministerial party, Tarneit arrive 1130, conduct official function, depart 1205, Wyndham Vale arrive 1212, conduct official function, depart 1315, Melb SX arrive 1345;
- Saturday 20 June: VLocity DMUs, Melb SX depart 0840, Wyndham Vale arrive 0920, stand at platform for public inspection, depart 1230, Melb SX arrive 1303;
- Innumerable driver training and test trains as has been the case since February.

The line and the new stations at Tarneit and Wyndham Vale opened on Sunday 21 June. On the first workday, 22 June, the car parks at the two new stations were full by the morning peak and many people used the stations.

It is interesting to travel on the section of line between Footscray and Sunshine. There are now six parallel lines here – 2 belong to V/Line, 2 belong to Metro and 2 belong to ARTC – the first two pairs of these tracks have trains every few minutes all day.

#### V/Line: Buses in the Central Highlands

On the weekend of 27 and 28 June buses replaced trains between Castlemaine and Bendigo while engineering works were undertaken.

#### Victoria: Puffer trains, ballast trains

From July operation (ie crewing) of special trains for Steamrail Victoria and the Seymour Railway Heritage Centre will be undertaken by Espee Railroad Services (the commercial arm of the Australian Railway Historical Society, Australian Capital Territory Division), rather than by V/Line. Espee will also operate ballast trains for ARTC in Victoria, as they already do for ARTC in NSW.

#### Level crossing city

St Albans, Ginifer and Heatherdale stations will be rebuilt below street level as part of the project to remove some of Melbourne's level crossings. Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced on 24 June that an alliance of Leighton Contractors, Aurecon and Hyder Consulting had been selected to remove crossings at Heatherdale Road in Mitcham, Blackburn Road in Blackburn, and at Main and Furlong Roads in St Albans. The \$480 million package includes \$151 million from the federal government. At each location the rail will be built below the roads. Labor promised to remove 50 level crossings over the next eight years, including 20 in its first term. To date the first 17 have been identified. The Premier said that at Heatherdale Road the boom gates were down for 66 minutes during the morning two-hour peak, which was unacceptable. Work will begin on the eastern suburb removals this year with all four projects to be finished by 2018.

## Melbourne Metro: The water leak that stopped a city

At the very busiest time of the day, 0826 on Thursday 18 June, a water leak caused the evacuation of Melbourne Metro's central control room in Collins St. The entire Melbourne suburban network was stopped, boom barriers came down across the city, about 100 trains were delayed, and an estimated 100,000 passengers were trapped. Eighteen minutes later at 0844 the centre was deemed to be safe and services resumed. The effects of the stoppage took at least an hour to be resolved. Activities across the city were delayed, for example, Monash University had to delay examinations. Metro's back-up control centre in Fitzroy was not brought into use, as it is said to take 50 minutes to bring it into action.

# Public Transport Victoria: Mapping the system

PTV has released a draft new rail map which combines the Melbourne suburban and Victorian country rail passenger lines. Unlike the former map, each suburban line is clearly identified by a separate colour. Country lines, however, are distinguished only according to whether the myki ticketing system is in use or not. The stylised map seriously distorts distances, for example, it makes the Hurstbridge suburban line (37 km) look about as long as the Albury country line (307 km).

A copy of the map is on page 7.

# Melbourne Metro: When in pain, don't get on the train. If you are ill, stay still

Sick passengers are delaying more than 12 services a day on Melbourne's train network, holding up thousands of commuters each year. Illness is one of the leading causes of trains running late and there are concerns the issue will only get worse as services become more crowded in peak hours. There have been 185 ill passengers so far this year, according to Metro, leading to delays on 2038 services across the network. This is a higher rate than last year when there were 3238 trains delayed by 400 sick commuters.

A Metro spokeswoman said there were dedicated first aid responders located at busy stations during the morning and afternoon peak, including all City Loop stations, Richmond,

Clifton Hill, North Melbourne, Caulfield and Box Hill. On 14 June, for example, there were three cases of sick passengers delaying trains during the morning rush. One of those involved an ill passenger on the Belgrave line at Parliament, which stopped an 0814 train for 10 minutes and delayed eight other services. A second incident happened on an 0830 Pakenham train, also at Parliament. This was delayed by eight minutes and held up another 15 trains. Other reasons for delays include police interventions, trespassers, vandals and people being hit by trains.

On its website, Metro asks that passengers who are feeling unwell not to get on board a train. Those who are already on a train should exit and alert a Metro employee. If a passenger can't find help they are told to press the red emergency button on the station platform. Other cities have also battled to reduce the logjams that sick passengers can create. Last year, Sydney Trains started putting up posters at stations asking unwell customers not to board its services.

#### Melbourne Metro rail tunnel funding

The Federal government has opened the door to possible funding of the Melbourne Metro Rail in an apparent thawing after months of hostility. Federal Infrastructure Minister Warren Truss said he expected his government would be approached to fund one of the state government's key infrastructure projects, an \$11 billion rail tunnel connecting north and south suburban lines through a second CBD subway. "We will probably receive approaches in relation to that project." he said. "If we receive those approaches then we will have them assessed by Infrastructure Australia and make a decision." His comments are at odds with Prime Minister Tony Abbott's resistance to funding Melbourne Metro and other rail projects. Mr Abbott has repeatedly insisted the federal government is opposed to funding urban rail projects. Mr Truss joined Premier Daniel Andrews on 14 June on the first trip between Southern Cross and the new Wyndham Vale station, where both leaders praised their cooperation. Mr Truss said that while he had not given up on the East West road Link, he was anxious to invest in more transport projects for Melbourne." The Federal Government is quite happy to fund metro rail projects," Mr Truss said."We've got to get on with providing good quality infrastructure in Melbourne," he said. Mr Andrews said he had received "very encouraging and positive" letters from Prime Minister Tony Abbott recently and believed they shared a "genuine commitment" to working together.

Federal Opposition Infrastructure spokesperson Anthony Albanese said Melbourne Metro had already been approved by Infrastructure Australia. He said the former Labor Federal government had put aside funding for Melbourne Metro in 2013 but the Coalition took it out.

#### Tasmanian upgrade

The Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Warren Truss, announced on 25 June that the Federal government has approved the release of \$54.6 million of the \$59.8 million committed for rail upgrade projects as part of Tasmania's Freight Rail Revitalisation scheme. The funding will be matched by the Tasmanian government. He said the upgrading projects would ensure rail's longevity in Tasmania by eliminating some of the failure points across the network, increasing safety, reliability and transit times and supporting the future growth and competitiveness of rail freight. "At the moment there are mining regions with high volume potential that are affected by ageing and failing infrastructure, such as the Melba Line in western Tasmania.

"Critical works such as sleeper and rail replacement, upgrades to rail bridges and culverts, level crossing upgrades and remediation of land slips will improve many of the sections across Tasmania's freight lines where there is a high risk of line failure that would spell costly delays for freight. Without action, Tasmania's rail freight network would soon deteriorate beyond repair, forcing all freight on to roads resulting in higher costs and consequently less cross modal competition for freight tasks. Should Tasmania bring forward a proposal for further capital works on the rail network, supported by a matched funding commitment, the Australian Government will provide a further \$59.8 million through future Budget processes," Mr Truss said.

#### Pacific National: SA coal trains to end

On 11 June Alinta Energy announced that its two power stations in Port Augusta and the associated coal mine at Leigh Creek will not operate beyond March 2018, and may close earlier (but not before March 2016). It claims that continuing operation has become increasingly uneconomic. This means that the coal trains operated by Pacific National from Leigh Creek to Port Augusta will also cease. This 246 km operation is the last on the original Central Australia line.

#### SA Budget

The SA Budget presented on 18 June included \$12 million over two years to upgrade signalling and communications cables on the metropolitan rail network, and \$4 million allocated over four years to upgrade security and facilities at railways stations. The electrification of the Gawler rail line remains a distant dream, unlikely before 2017-18.

**Thanks** to Tony Bailey, Paul Brown, Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Len Regan, James Thomas, Roger Wheaton, David Whiteford, www.railpage.com.au, Age, Australian, Geelong Advertiser, Herald Sun, Railway Digest, Sydney Morning Herald, and Transit Australia for Rail news.

### **AIR NEWS**

#### **Fares**

From September, German airline **Lufthansa** will charge extra for travel purchased through travel agents or travel sites such as Expedia or Webjet. The surcharge will be €16 (\$A23). This is an attempt to direct customers to its own website and away from fare comparison websites. US airline **Spirit** already charges a similar \$US10 surcharge. It is expected in the industry that other airlines will now follow. Some other airlines, eg US carrier **Delta**, have removed their fares from travel comparison sites. Many airlines consider that these "middleman" sites receive too high a proportion of their fares. Lufthansa says that in its case, this amounts to \$US 100 million per annum.

An International Air Transport Association conference was told on 11 June of the possibility that computer programs can be used to vary the price charged to prospective passengers according to the postcode of the customer, or the customer's history, or according to the web browser used (Safari, apparently, being regarded as used by better off people than Explorer users!). Spanish airline **Vueling** said it was inevitable that such data would be used to influence prices. **Qantas** says it has no plans to introduce such differential fares. **Virgin Australia** said it used data of Velocity members to "enhance" the experience for travelers and target product and fare offers.

#### International

Qantas subsidiary **Jetstar NZ** launched trans-Tasman services in 2005 and domestic New Zealand services in June 2009. At present it flies between Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Queenstown. From December it will expand to an additional four ports, sparking additional competition with Air New Zealand. Under consideration are Hamilton, Rotorua, New Plymouth, Napier, Palmerston North, Nelson and Invercargill.

**Air New Zealand** has withdrawn flights to Kaitaia, Whakatane and Westport.

#### **Domestic**

**Virgin Australia** ceased its weekly Busselton flights from 20 April due to low passenger numbers. The Busselton flight was a deviation of a Perth – Albany service. Busselton now has no scheduled flights to Perth.

**Jetstar Australia** will introduce a daily Avalon – Gold Coast service from 26 October, departing Avalon at 1000 and the Gold Coast at 1130.

A new company, **Blue Sky Airlines** backed by hotelier Jerry Schwartz, is to introduce amphibian plane flights between Sydney Rose Bay, Newcastle Habour and Cessnock in October to support his luxury and corporate tourism ventures in the Hunter Valley.

**Thanks** to the David Whiteford, *Australian*, *Daily Telegraph* and the *Busselton-Dunsborough Times* for Air news.

### ODD SPOT

On the weekend of 30-31 May Metro Trains Melbourne trains from the Burnley group of lines (eastern suburbs) could not run via the City Loop due to works. They were advertised as running "direct to Flinders St via Southern Cross" – this is, however, impossible except via the Loop.

Thanks to Graeme Reynolds for Odd Spot.

### About Table Talk

*Table Talk* is published monthly by the Australian Timetable Association Inc. (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering recent timetable news items. The ATA also publishes the *Times* covering timetable history and analysis. Contributions are invited and are very welcome. Please send these to the appropriate Editor. ABN 74248483468.

The deadline for Table Talk is the last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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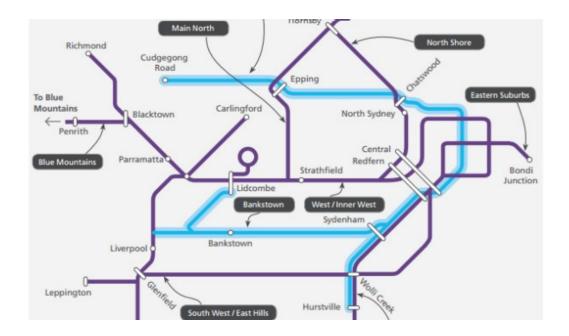
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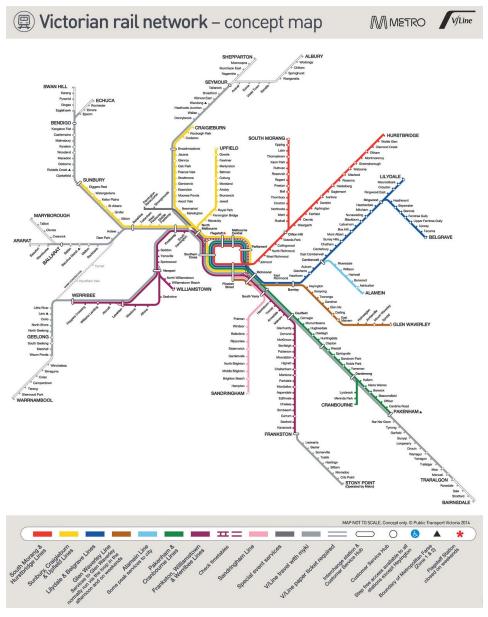
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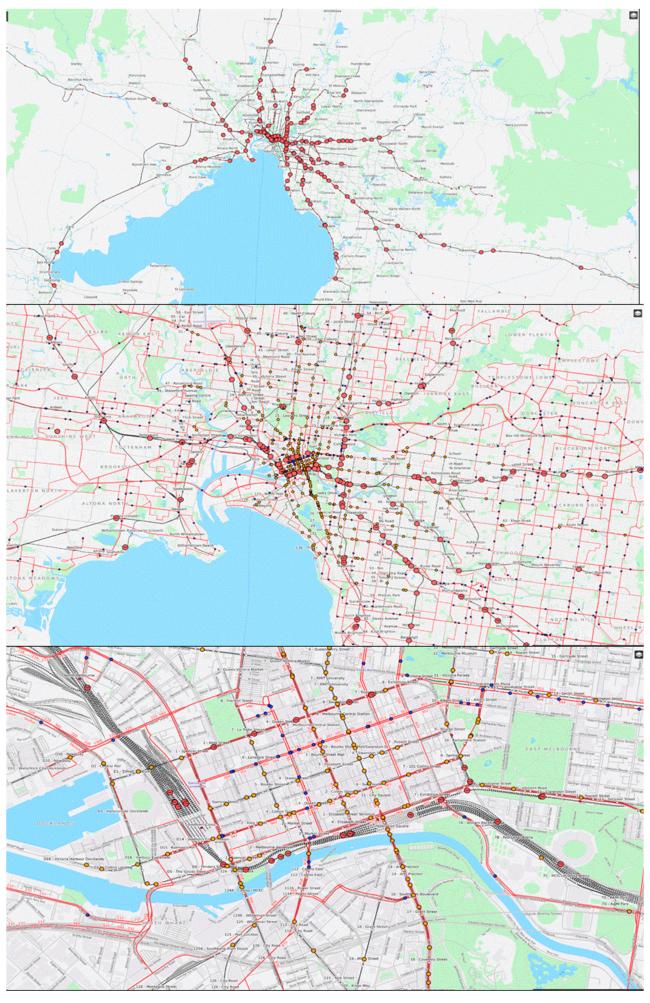
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### The proposed Sydney Metro – article on page 3



Public Transport Victoria's proposed new rail map – article on page 5.



General Transit Feed System's view of Melbourne – article on page 2.