

Blue Mountains Commuter & Transport Users Assoc.
Secretary 22 Mount Street Glenbrook
Phone. 47391052 Fax 47391007 email cristran@big pond.com,

Dr. Thomas Parry
Chairman.
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW.
Level 2, 44 Market Street
Sydney NSW 2000
(PO box Q290
QVB Post Office NSW 1230).

Ref. IPART2003
9th June 03

Dear Dr. Parry

Determination of Passenger Transport fares from September 2003
City Rail and State Transit Buses and Ferries.

The submission is made on behalf of the Association Members regarding fares and other attributes of the systems that are relevant to any increase of fares on all systems.

Submission is tabled as follows.

1. Summary.
2. City Rail.
3. Buses
4. Ferries.

Attachment

On behalf of the Association I wish to thank the Staff of the Tribunal for the assistance given in compiling this submission.

I also wish to acknowledge the assistance given by Mr. Ed. McKenzie President Vice Presidents Noel Ackland, Ian Heather, Treasurer John Webb. and the members in compiling this submission.

Yours faithfully.

Paul Trevaskis
Hon. Secretary

Attachments;

Copy of Diary from Vice President Noel Ackland concerning experiences gathered during the Upgrading Process.

Copy of the letter sent August 2002 to RIC suggesting an Asset Register of the Rail System and other comments with the view of saving funds.

(2).

1. Summary.

- (a). The Association members at the recent meeting held at Valley Heights on 21st and Katoomba on 24th May decided that the Association would not agree to any increase in fares above the CPI for the following reasons.
- There does not appear to be any indication by City Rail to address the issues that the members have raised with City Rail for a considerable period.
The major issues are.
 - ❖ Timetable Changes.
 - ❖ Renewal of toilets on the Vsets and Air Conditioning.
 - ❖ Upgrading Issues (see attachment1)
 - ❖ Information and Marketing to the General Public.
 - ❖ Ticketing Issues.
 - ❖ Connections.
 - ❖ Access and Accommodation for bikes and wheel chairs.
- (b). The Association has seen changes to the Management of City Rail;
- ❖ The Rail Services Aust and Rail Access Corp combined into RIC.
 - ❖ The Sale of Freightcorp.
- (c) There appears to be many Staff changes for various reasons in State Rail Management, which does not appear to the association members a stability within State Rail fortunately there is not the same changes on the Mountain Stations.
- (d) The recent Waterfall Accident even though it was not on the Western Line there are some aspects revealed in Inquiry that the Association would have thought State Rail would have addressed since the Glenbrook Inquiry.
- (e) The Upgrading has been a constant problem for the Association with inadequate Information especially to the wider Community, concentration on stations and 131500 has not been in the Associations view satisfactory (See attachment).
- (f). There are various Government Funding attributes within the State Rail Annual _____ Report: We have some questions and reservations, see comment later.
- (g). The Association is receiving comments from the community that if the fares are _____ increased then we will witness further decrease in usage; we have already seen 30% increase in fares and it is compounding each year.
Recent statistics in the Sydney Morning Herald 2/6/03 illustrated that the Average net income including wages, dividends, business and property income after _____ Payment of income tax and GST and interest in Zone 2002 was \$14,644
On this income you would not be able to pay off a home and any increase of fares would put pressure on the low-income earners.

Over 3

(3)

The Association therefore submits the following in support of the member's decision on not accepting any increase above the CPI.

Timetable Changes.

The Association has endeavoured over a long period to have City Rail address the break in service in the P.M. Peak between Katoomba and Mt Victoria at 1.53 P.M. to 4.18 P.M. There is a strong request for hourly service to Mt. Victoria

The Association has consistently seek an answer to the break in the rail service in the P.M. peak at Penrith namely between 5.30 P.M to 6.46 P.M to the Upper Mountains (The Great Western Highway is fast becoming a racetrack and is Rail's competitor) .

The Association is also seeking in the longer term a shuttle service that would give with the existing service a half hour service during the day between Katoomba and Penrith.

Toilets & Air Conditioning on V sets.

The Association was informed that the toilets on the V sets had a design problem, that caused overflow of water onto the floor etc we are still waiting for City Rail to complete this programme.

Air Conditioning.

The Association has feedback from members that indicates variability in temperature and comfort.

The Association is of the opinion that the air conditioning in the Vsets should be checked at Central Station and not wait for the return of the trains to Flemington. Car Sheds.

Upgrading. (Please view attached document)

This issue has been raised many times not only by members of the Association but also members of the community about the number of close downs that occur, information appears lacking especially those in the Community who do not travel regularly.

- ❖ Information is inadequate we have endeavoured to have information placed in the Blue Mountains Gazette to no avail. There are people in the Community who do not have access to Computers and are infrequent users but want to use the system on the weekends.
- ❖ Connections between Buses and Trains are not reliable.
- ❖ The lack of a timetable, that was discontinued without any consultation is another cause of complaint, we did have printed timetables that were of assistance not only to the Community but also it must have been a discipline on staff to adhere to a timetable
- ❖ Information to Tourist Operators and Tourist Information Centres should be advised of the Upgrading Programmes **Contd 4**

Upgrading (contd.)

- ❖ The Association wrote to the Chairman of RIC in August 02 indicating / suggesting that an inventory of the Rail Infrastructure should be catalogued, (copy attached) we were pleased that the Co-ordinator General indicated that there is “the lack of an adequate centralised asset management plans and maintenance assurance programmes “ this was in relation to bridges but it would be of interest if this applied to the whole system.”

One of the observations in regards to Upgrading are, the methodology used, for instance we were informed that the recent close down between Blacktown and St Marys would enable maintenance of the overhead would be carried out.

Observation of this work it appears it is not finished so we will see another period of interruption to the Service.” Why not programme for the job to be fully completed?

- ❖ The Blue Mountains is renowned for Tourists and this group of Visitors would not be familiar with our system and any day trips on the weekends for instance be out of the question when the extra times of travel would preclude any worthwhile time in the Blue Mountains.
- ❖ The question is how much revenue is lost from people not using the service on weekends plus the component that is lost from the Community who have either used the system on these occasions and given it away or because of the reputation of City Rail do not consider it on other occasions.
- ❖ Information as received indicates that there is to be change in that only one sector will be carried out on weekends unfortunately if there are a number of Sectors on the System for instance between Mt.Vic and Sydney the number of close downs may be similar to the present State Rail has not indicated how many Sectors there are and with the change once again to the Management Structure i.e RIC and State Rail to Transport coordination Authority the Association is doubt full of satisfactory outcomes
- ❖ The Association is also concerned that the Standards of workmanship of the System that RIC has to adhered to is not clearly available and independent Audit is not forthcoming and considering the number of Reports that are commissioned e.g Christie, Godfrey, ministerial etc we often wonder why there is so many. How often do we observe governments calling for a reports and any result of these reports are marginal. ?

Over 5.

(5).

Information/ Marketing.

The Association has repeatedly requested that City Rail advertise in the local Blue Mountains Gazette the various services and activities of State Rail that gives the positive actions of State Rail even in the local areas there are some, for example on the positive aspects

- ❖ Progress on the pedestrian bridge at Faulconbridge
- ❖ Blaxland Easy Access.
- ❖ The University Station at Werrington.
- ❖ Various promotions by State Rail.
- ❖ Upgrading Progress where we are at and how far we have to go.
- ❖ What other stations in the network that are being upgraded.

The Association is of the opinion that City Rail is not marketing as it should it, a once a month approach locally may help the image, it is of interest that State Rail allows Wynyard Station to be covered with advertisements, putting the information before the public, not all the public have access to the Web and 131500 is not always satisfactory One reply received from 131500 concerning toilets on the Vsets was to the effect (They are dirty because more people are using them.

In regards to 131500 Service does City Rail know how many calls are abandoned?

Ticketing.

The Association has received many comments on this Issue namely.

- ❖ The Break of Journey is not available.
- ❖ A three-day pass on the Mountains especially for tourist.
- ❖ Travel ten tickets etc not available.
- ❖ Next Day Return as peoples travel patterns is many and varied.
- ❖ The extra cost to the Air Port is not conducive to attract passengers.
- ❖ Part Time and Casual workers are not accommodated.

The comment from members State Rail is willing to restructure, lease and outsource many aspects of the management system but to react to customers aspirations and change of use State Rail it is found wanting.

With all the aforementioned ticketing issue we feel that State Rail has not reacted in a manner that would attract more customers and having to wait to 2006 when Integrated Ticketing to be introduced it may be to late also when the ticketing system was introduced the Cubic System it has proved inflexible to allow Customer satisfaction

The Association is very pleased that State Rail is employing Transit Police who have the appropriate authority to ensure that the customers have the correct tickets, other conditions of travel e.g. Feet On Seats. We feel that the employment of the Chubb Security was a Waste of Money as their authority to react to situations was limited. The Association members felt that the revenue would increase if State Rail got serious about fare. The article in the Daily Telegraph 22/4/03 that the system lost \$17 million Through fare evasion in 2001-2002 and may a loss of \$48 million 2002-2003. If the last figure is near the mark then to collect this amount will mean an increase to fare \$1.million a week, what the increase State Rail would receive from an amount above CPI would be interesting.

Cont. 6

Connections.

The Association has the opinion the City Rail could improve fare box return by investigating the connections of trains at various model points for example at Westmead we have the situation the Cumberland Trains and Inter City miss connections by a minute, this convenience is not only for Blue Mountains Customers but customers that use the Inter-City service from Blacktown and Penrith.

Connections at Central from the Blue Mountains Services to the South Coast and Central Coast and vice versa.

Another interesting comment is concerning the Air Port Link Service eg. The service from the Air Ports to Central is one whose destination via Circular Quay is to other suburban destinations, we believe that customers should be advised where the service is going. This means that customers who may be going to said destination do not need to change this is a minor aspect but if City Rail did adjust the minors increase patronage may occur without extra funding requirements

City Rail could explore these and other examples.

Comments re Submission by City Rail.

Improvements to the System.

The Association is thankful for the many improvements that City Rail is doing to the system namely.

- ❖ Easy Access Programmes, all aspects of this programme are being accepted not only by those with disabilities but other customers, we are ahead of many countries in this aspect.
- ❖ Station Improvements.
- ❖ The direct benefits to the Community eg. Road Congestion traffic noise, traffic accidents and car operating costs.
- ❖ Car parking and canopies on stations.

The Association welcomes the imitative taken with the Employment of Transit Officers other Security Guards were in our opinion not as productive.

Clause 2,3 About State Rail business and markets.

The Association membership is a diverse group who not only use the Peak Hour services but off peak as well, we believe that City Rail should consider promotion of the system for a 24hour service “ All Day Every day”.

Comments we receive are concerned with Off Peak, Weekends and Holidays Services: whether they be Work, Health, Social, Special Events and Tourist Travel.

The Association therefore requests the Tribunal to seek from City Rail the on time running of the Off Peak and Weekend Services to be included in monthly statistics.

(7).

2.4 Our Customers.

The Association is not in agreement of reducing the discount of weekly and periodical tickets, members indicate **If you are loosing customers why increase fares, what product has it's price increased when sales are down, already we observe increase in car usage and any increase in weekly fares etc may see further erosion of users.**

2.6 External Benefits.

The Association agrees with City Rail's approach to this matter the Association has established an Integrated Transport Forum in the Mountains to improve communication with City Rail the Blue Mountains City Council, local Bus Companies including the Tourist Component and Taxis, with the view to improve Transport Services on the Mountains.

The aim is to improve connections and services and at present the Council with funding from Dept of Transport for identification of bus stops across the Mountains. This programme is a three year programme commencing with Katoomba Leura Area and the Highway.

We are also exploring the use of buses as supplementary bus services to rail and other services, we believe we are there for the long haul to provide services and facilities for the Community and thus increase the use of Public Transport.

2.7 Fares comparisons.

The Association is constantly being exposed to this argument but the fact of the matter is that each Country has different parameters; we believe we have to think laterally and come up with the ways and means to address the issue.

The users of the NSW System travel different distances and have different incomes and society has different social values.

The Association has often questioned survey outcomes and often there is confusion between the statistics and results, last year we were told the there was no growth but in another instance there was growth, the Association requests that City Rail indicate.

- ❖ When & where the survey was taken.
- ❖ The sample size
- ❖ The accuracy
- ❖ There must be correlation between other Authorities and City Rail's statistics on similar surveys e.g. Income.

Customers may pay more if the fare structure includes service and facilities that will suit their needs and expectations.

The customer also looks at the whole journey from door to door, the cost of travel is subsequently based on to some extent the cost of petrol, how we overcome this is a group task and now the NSW Planning is to be responsible for developments of State Rail capacity the Association will have to address this issue with NSW Planning

(8)

2.8.2 Status of fare structure.

The Association has misgivings on the proposal to reduce the discount on the **off peak** fare because of the following.

- ❖ Why increase fares when the patronage is falling.
- ❖ People on low income have difficulty in paying the existing fare now.
- ❖ People on low income endeavouring to go the T.A.F.E have problems as it is.
- ❖ Rail Services On Time Running is questionable.
- ❖ The recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald 7-8 /6/03 indicated that there is a rise in unemployment in the range of 55-64 age group of the population, as this group in part would not be eligible for the Seniors Discount

- ❖ Has City Rail costed the amount lost from fare box during upgrading on weekends and why is the checking of tickets is not readily observed.?

This information further supports the Association view that there should be more accurate and reliable surveys taken by City Rail.

2.9.3. Travel Ten Tickets.

The Association is very disappointed that we have to wait for the Integrated Ticket System to address. The Association is monitoring this aspect and will be making representations on the Smartcard we do not want an Electronic Purse.

The Association is of the opinion that the ticketing system should be flexible and we do not feel it is beyond the capability of City Rail to allow flexible ticketing types to be sold by Station Staff.

2.9.1. Customer Service Commitment.

The Association feels that the Charter should be one that has some commitment to the Customer that has “**TEETH**”.

Issues that arise that do not meet the Charter should be documented and correction details are published by way of reports on three monthly basis.

3.1.1. Service Reliability & 2.9.7 On-Time Running.

The service status should be monitored “ All Day - Every Day “ as previously stated

3.1.2 Accessibility of City Rail Stations.

The Association is very pleased with the Access Programme and is looking forward to having an extension of the Easy Access Programme on the Blue Mountains.

Over 9

(9).

3.1.3. System Safety.

I have been attending the Waterfall Inquiry and observing many aspects of the Inquiry. The Association will comment on the Inquiry when the final report is released.

3.1.4 Passenger Safety.

Commented previously on page 5.

3.1.6 Customer Feedback.

We acknowledge that a lot of effort has been directed to establish the service but feedback from members has not been always favourable, please see page 5

Ticketing and Marketing.

3.2.1 Capitol Works Improvement.

The Association is very appreciative of many works being undertaken by City Rail in regards to the Millennium Train we have one question which we would appreciate an answer from City Rail i.e.

Millennium Train

This train is being planned in part to replace the Tulloch Cars as secretary I wrote to a previous Executive Officer asking the following question.

As the number of Tulloch cars approx 50 in service are trailer cars then if these are within drawn then we must have a number of 8 cars sets minus trailer cars, and as the Tulloch cars cannot be replaced within the sets they are taken from by Millennium cars, does this mean less 8 car sets unless of course a number of power cars are remodelled into trailer cars? Perhaps I am getting to critical an answer to this would be of interest.

In reference to this train the Association believes that prototype testing should be taken more seriously by the Government, State Rail and the manufacturer and not put into service or accepted by State Rail before all engineering standards are meet. It would be o the Governments responsibility to ensure that dates of introduction are realistic and not at the bequest of Ministers desire for solely for electorate purposes, certainly a prototype could be viewed by the Community but not in the manner we have observed recently.

The Association however is impressed with the new train.

The New Outer Suburban and Hunter Diesels

The Association is interested in the New Outer Suburban Cars and Hunter Diesels being manufactured by United Goninan & Co Ltd.

The Association is requesting that proper prototype testing is performed before putting into service as there must be a cost to the Government when withdrawal of the units from service

Over 10

In the Outer Suburban case the Association is disappointed in that there will be 2 X 3 seating which our Community is not impressed, the 3 x 2 seating in the Tangara by Goninan is not popular and the riding comfort also is a lot to be desired certainly not as good as the V sets. Having two different Companies designing a vehicle must not be cost effective; the Millennium could be manufactured by both companies with appropriate internal changes for different users. (This can be done as Telecom (Telstra) had the same design of equipment manufactured by different companies made under licence) Of course the design would be under the competitive system.

Another aspect that SRA should consider is that there should be a capability of ordering cars on a continuous basis as and when needed.

Financial Performance. Page 29

The Association has some questions concerning payment to RIC.

- ❖ Paragraph 4. \$27 million capitol grants to RIC.
- ❖ Access charges to RIC increased by \$44 million
- ❖ The Annual Report indicates that there is \$389.868 million paid to RIC 2001 – 2002.

Our question is why does State Rail pay to a Government Corporation so much money which must be a transfer of monies from a grant from State Government in the first place We wonder how much this accounting costs when it could be given to RIC in the first place also after January 2004 when RIC and State Rail what happens then?

Leasing

Another aspect when notice in the Annual Report \$450.841 million is for leasing of rolling stock, our question if the money raised from the selling of rolling stock was a Government initiative to raise money and then State Rail has to pay for the lease of the rolling stock should this money come out of Treasury and the interest etc be paid by Treasury. Would it be prudent to own your rolling stock

Sale of the Estate.

Another question raised by Members is when Rail Estate sells land etc eg a Chullora location sold for \$18. million does this go to State Rail for transport improvements and thus reduce the need for raising fares. Members indicated the land was owned by the State on behalf of the Community?

I thank you for the opportunity to partake of this Inquiry

Yours faithfully

Paul Trevaskis Hon Sect. J.P. MLIT

Note: We understand that this Inquiry does not encompass Concession fares but as the Association members have indicated that we would agree to an increase in the Seniors Concession we believe that an increase in concessions would improve the farebox takings. P.T.

TRACKWORK TRIALS

I am at present having to travel from Wentworth Falls to Wentworthville every Saturday morning to attend work from 0900 to 1200. I normally catch the train at 0735, change at Blacktown to the 0853 Lindfield train and get to Wentworthville at 0902. I do not have alternative transport and have to endure the rigours of Trackwork. Consequently I am carefully logging some of my experiences. Times are all accurate as checked to the second each morning at Springwood. Dates have not been included, as this is not a personal witch-hunt but rather looking for overall problems and management issues, which need to be addressed *so* as to make everybody's journey smoother.

First experience. Interurban train to Penrith, Suburban trains from Penrith.

Leave Wentworth Falls at 0635. And arrive at Penrith at 0735, however Suburban train has just left, which brings many complaints from passengers and implacable response from staff. Next Suburban train (0750) runs via Up Main from St Marys with Up Suburban being used as Down Main while track possession is on Down Main and Suburban. Train takes long dwell times at each station as is obviously allowed extra time to run through works area (couldn't previous train therefore be held for three minutes at Penrith?). It is a cold morning, and despite Penrith yard being well stocked, we are given a non air-conditioned, and therefore cold, trainset. Arrive at Seven Hills at 0825, which is 10 minutes later than normal, and notice that there is a local due in three minutes. Finally arrive at Wentworthville at 0832.

Leave Wentworthville on train at 1207 change at Seven Hills and arrive Penrith at 1258, again with slow running and long dwell times. Interurban has gone before we arrive, next one is at 1347. I observe bewildered German tourists trying to get to Katoomba, and wonder if they are happy to come halfway round the world to spend fifty minutes sitting on Penrith Station.

Comments

Penrith should make sure that on cold mornings when they have plenty of choice, they provide heated trains.

When there is extra time allowed some of this could be utilised in communicating with Bus Marshals to ensure passengers are not stranded.

As suggested before when interurban are only running to Penrith or Blacktown, instead of having stock and staff idle on such days there should be a half-hourly train service between Penrith/ Blacktown and at least Katoomba.

Second Experience. Interurban to Emu Plains, bus from Emu Plains to St Marys. Suburban trains from St Marys.

Arrive Emu Plains on time, transfer to bus smoothly. Bus leaves when full, travels to Penrith to pickup and setdown. From there we go straight to St Marys via the northern route. Arrive St Marys at 0758 and disembark from bus to the sight of the train leaving. The Station Attendant is apologetic, says he would have held the train if he knew the bus was that close. He says there is to be a 15 minute service from 0845. Next train is at 0828 -semi express - and does not stop at Wentworthville. The next local will be at 0844 so should get me there at about 0910. Acting on my train knowledge I take the semi-express to Seven Hills to check on trains from Richmond. Incidentally, the train from St Marys is a four car set which is 50% full out of St Marys, and with passengers standing into the saloons by Blacktown. I'm in luck as we arrive at Seven Hills at 0850 and the local is at 0856, so I arrive at Wentworthville at 0903. I check with Station Master on Platform 1& 2 about Down trains after 12noon, he advises there is one at 1207 and 1223. Returning after 1200 I note that 1207 train does not stop. Does the Station Master know which are which? I take 1220 train to St Marys, and arrive at St Marys at 1257. On arrival, I ask the St Marys Station Attendant, does he have a Special Train Notice for the weekend running, that is a full timetable? He shows me all he has -just a printed list of arrivals and departures at St Marys, no other knowledge. He is helpful and willing but limited in the knowledge he has been given. I board the bus which leaves at 1305 and arrives at Emu Plains via Penrith, at 1335. Talk to CityRail staff there about communication with buses. They are at that moment in contact with the Bus Marshals and are holding the Interurban until the next bus arrives. They tell me that they have to rely on this communication with the Bus Marshals to determine whether to hold trains. It turns out that the bus is not coming, so the Interurban departs at 1342, which I note is 10 minutes earlier than normally timetabled.

Comments

Staff are not kept informed and do not have access to complete train times when a separate time table is in operation. Surely this can be available in the form of an e-mail to each Station, and if this can be done why not also on the Cityrail website. Lack of knowledge for people travelling to destinations other than Central is vital. I can manage only because I have a good knowledge of how the system normally works.

If the interurban trains are leaving Emu Plains 10 minutes earlier and running as such to their destinations, who tells all the Passengers who arrive at Lapstone to Katoomba etc that the train they have missed was running earlier today and they have a 60+ minute wait? Is this all covered in that glib comment on the Trackwork notices "allow an extra 60 minutes to your journey time". What, for a trip from Woodford to Katoomba?

Third Experience Bus to Penrith, Suburban train from Penrith.

Bus departs Wentworth Falls at 0637, stopping all stations to Blaxland then Penrith. Arrives Penrith at 0735, - which is the same time taken for a

train stopping at all stations. Suburban train leaves Penrith at 0749 arrives Seven Hills at 0815. There is a local at 0816 and I arrive at Wentworthville at 0822.

Departing Wentworthville on the 1222 Richmond train I change at Seven Hills for the 1240 which arrives at Penrith at 1306. The bus, when full, departs at 1315 and joins the Motorway at 1330! We arrive at Wentworth Falls at 1415. Same time from Penrith to Wentworth Falls as the train, but with the bus not going to Emu Plains, Lapstone or Glenbrook.

Fourth Experience. Interurban to Blacktown and Suburbans from there.

Train from Wentworth Falls at 0735, station DVA has not been altered and gives normal stopping pattern with no mention of changing at Blacktown. Arrive Blacktown on time and change to No1 platform for local train.

Before leaving Wentworthville I check my timetable and decide to take the 1203 Up (Run 68AD) to Westmead, change to the 1215 Penrith train to Seven Hills and Blacktown (Run 73BD). This should get me to Blacktown at 1224 with 11 minutes before the mountain train. The concourse indicator at Westmead says next train is at 1220 and is all stations. Train arrives at 1216, DVA says all stations, Guard makes own announcement -Seven Hills, Blacktown, and all to Penrith - contrary to DVA station announcement. Time lost. Leave Westmead at 1219, arrive Seven Hills at 1224 and Blacktown (platform No7) at 1226. Interurban (W541) is sitting on No6 and is due out at 1247 and not 1236! This I deduce is to 'connect' (?) with Suburban train (Run 68BC) which departs Central at 1206 - 4 minutes after W541 would normally depart Central.

Comments

Surely with the sophistication and versatility of the long line PA and DVA systems the actual content of the announcement should be relevant and helpful. When buses are replacing trains surely an announcement can be arranged to be played, say every fifteen minutes, advising passengers of the alteration to normal services.

We are always being told by various Cityrail officials that there are no such things as connections in the timetable, *so* it is interesting to notice these connections and hear them announce as such.

Fifth Experience. Interurban to Blacktown and Suburbans from Blacktown.

Depart Wentworth Falls at 0635 for Blacktown. At Springwood the guard announces there will be trains every 10 minutes from Blacktown. On leaving Penrith there are only 17 passengers in my carriage (3rd). Arrive Blacktown at 0748 on Platform 5. Next Suburban at 0758, I count 170 passengers waiting on No 4 platform for this train. The indicator says all stops

to Flemington then Strathfield, Burwood, Redfern and Central. An 8-car train arrives – it is the local that we saw sitting at Penrith. We depart Blacktown at 0802. The next advertised train is 0822, and our Interurban is still sitting at Platform 5. As we leave we pass the previous 4 Car Interurban set under the Sunnyholt Rd bridge. Depart Seven Hills 0807, Toongabbie 0810, Pendle Hill 0812 and Wentworthville 0814.

Comments

Once again plenty of trains around but not carrying passengers back up the mountains, I understand that the train crews find it frustrating also

Talking to Staff at Blacktown reveals their frustrations at the STNs that are produced for Trackwork. They cannot understand why some simpler Time-tables – preferably of a standard nature- cannot be made and re-used each time, especially when Trackwork is in the same area.

Sixth Experience. Bus to Penrith and Suburban trains from Penrith.

Expecting a Bus at 0635 I arrive at Wentworth Falls Station at 0622. Bus finally arrives at 0650, Driver says he was due out of Katoomba at 0640. There are no Route or other signs on the front of the Bus, which incidentally is empty. By Springwood (0722) we have only six Passengers. Arrive at Penrith (with one extra passenger from Blaxland) at 0752 as train departs once again! The Bus Marshal at Penrith does not have times of Bus departures from Katoomba and other origins, only has departure times from Penrith and these are every half hour. The next Suburban train is at 0820, and is at least air-conditioned. I arrive at Seven Hills at 0848 and change for a Liverpool train at 0850 to Wentworthville.

Departing Wentworthville on the 1208 train, and change at Blacktown to the train at 1226 arriving Penrith at 1250. The Bus leaves at 1258 (14 Passengers) and gets to the Motorway at 1311 going via Russell St.

Comments

Surely it is imperative apart from common sense to arrange the Bus times to coincide with the normal Train times as per the time-table. Had I gone onto the Station platform at Wentworth Falls to ring up I probably would have missed the Bus.

If there is a Bus time-table then why is it not available to all Bus Marshals or is this the same as for the Train time-table, where only certain times are available to certain staff

Seventh Experience Trains to Emu Plains and Bus to Seven Hills

Bus departs Wentworth Falls at 0631.05, then proceeds straight to Lawson but barely stops, as there is no-one waiting, and on to Hazelbrook. Driver announces it is "programmed stops" only. Leaves Hazelbrook at

0641.20, Woodford at 0644.35, no stop at Linden, (apparently not 'programmed') leaves Faulconbridge at 0651.48, and Springwood at 0658.50. We arrive at Penrith at 0726, the next train is announced to be at 0750, as the Platform Indicators are not working. The train arrives at 0738, but owing to a problem with a 'broken window', does not leave until 0803.

Comments

Again a rather bizarre bus time-table, to say the least. Who is responsible for these seemingly endless variations to a normal trip?

The most important time for all information systems to be working is when normal services are disrupted or changed, to have no Platform indicators at Penrith is inexcusable.

Again, a yard full of trains at Penrith, but we all have to wait while one is investigated or repaired.

Final comments

I would be interested in seeing just how much fare revenue is lost because of Trackwork. Apart from never seeing anybody checking tickets anywhere, anytime, trains that are normally at least half full by Penrith are easily replaced by a one bus, and in some cases this seems to be an over supply. It is rather pointless, during Trackwork in the Mountains, to provide more bus services between Penrith and the Mountains than normal train services,, but not back this up with an increased frequency of train services, when the Trackwork is between Penrith and Blacktown, or Blacktown and Granville etc. In ways such as this the service can be improved at small or minimal cost, but improvements need to be better publicised, especially to local residents in the affected areas.

Dislocations are tolerable if some effort is seen to be made to overcome them, but when passengers are made to wait inordinately long times the overall effect is quite negative.

Noel Ackland

Blue Mountains Commuter & Transport Users Assoc.

Ref.Upgrading RIC.1

Date 26th August 02

Mr. Rod. Sims Bcomm (Hons),MEc
Chairman.
Rail Infrastructure Corporation.
CC. Mr, Mike Metcalfe Area Manager.

Dear Sir.

There are a number of issues that the Association has had in the last few years and one of the major questions put to us is:

How long will the Upgrading last and when will it finish?

The Community has complained with the following comments about the system.

- Break of journey,
- Longer journey times.
- Misinformation to customers
- In the Blue Mountains case non-use of Vsets.

The Association is well aware of the necessity of maintenance but there are questions as to what standards are being adopted and whether practices and procedures can be improved to reduce the occurrences of close down.

There are three aspects that have been on our minds for some time these being:

- Has there has been adequate finances available for RIC to maintain the system to the standards that ensures that breakdowns do not occur in the system unnecessarily.
- Has the Board of RIC maintained an inventory of the whole Interurban and Suburban Rail System in relation to the Upgrading Process? Eg.
What sections of the system has been upgraded?
What sections have been partially upgraded?
What sections that has not been upgraded?

Does this inventory include all aspects i.e?

1. Overhead Wiring including supports.
2. Power distribution, feeds etc.
3. Improved power supply and distribution to enable
 - a. Increase in track usage.
 - b. Increase power requirements of new consists.
 - c. Increase speed of the new consists
4. Track ballasting.
5. Rail renewal.
6. Drainage.
7. Points.
7. Bridges and Culverts.
8. Signalling and associated works.

This inventory to include the cost of renewal and the programme pertaining to same.

Over 2

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Track Capacity.

- Has the Board an inventory that lists the capacity of all the tracks in the Sydney Basin eg.

The track capacity of all sections of the system and what the capacity is at present

- Eg.
- A. The track capacity of the Harbour Bridge Wynyard Central.
 - B. Lidcombe to Central.
 - C. Sydenham to Central.

The rest of system should be considered accordingly we believe that this Inventory should be available for all interested parties, in our case we believe that accent between the Blue Mountains and Parramatta as we feel that increase of rail services will be required in the future.

The Association members are experienced in Total Quality Management and are questioning whether the standards of workmanship is of a quality that ensures safety and the return to the same location is only required on rare occasions.

The English Railway Magazine Modern Railways March 02 illustrates the point I am endeavouring to address from page 59 of this magazine I quote

“ The approach helps set out what work and hence expenditure we will need to reach various goals, and also what we will get. It does not supersede engineering decision-making or specification of works.

Thus, facts can be supported by an inventory of what there is. A list of asset characteristics and their current characteristics and their current condition, the requirements of the business, the standards to be applied, obligations such as there might be, and unit costs. Out puts will give types of solution, ranging perhaps from leave as it is, repair, replace or upgrade. Volumes and costs can be aggregated for projects as a whole.

For example, the question might be asked as to what spend is needed on a given section of track to get it in condition to give section to give the outputs that customers want. This might seem a simple question, but in reality the answer needs to take into account the following:

- I. Age of track
- II. Quality of initial installation
- III. Quality of maintenance.
- IV. Consistency of maintenance.
- V. Variations in rail profile
- VI. Type of rolling stock

Exert from Modern Railways contd.

- VII. Variability of rolling stock
- VIII. Wheel profiles.
- IX. Traffic levels
- X. Different types and qualities of rail, sleepers and ballast.

The Association is not endeavouring to tell RIC how to do the job but with the continuing questions asked by members of the Association and the Community when is the upgrading finishing we understand that maintenance is required contd 3.

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But the members are very interested in the programme and what can be achieved with a review of the process for the benefit of the customers both freight and passenger.

As a result of discussion at our last meeting the members requested that I write to you requesting a representative from RIC to attend at our next meeting, which will be held on the following date and location.

Members are representative of many fields, legal, health, finance, chemical, engineering, communication etc.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

Paul Trevaskis MILT Hon.Sect.

Note We did have a representative for RIC attend but addressed some local issues. but not the inventory issue

The recent publicity in the Media has supported our request in regards to an Asset Register.

We will expand this aspect to the other Inquiry as announced by the Minister of Transport Mr.M. Costa