

TICKET AND TRAVEL

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SETTING OUT

A ticket's price is only one aspect of a journey's value. Neither a tram journey nor those who work on trams are merely means to an end. Trams invite people to be 'travellers', yet now we are treated as merely 'customers' or 'commuters'. In twenty *stop points* I suggest an alternative horizon for urban planning that responds to the phasing out of Melbourne's tram conductors._

FIRST STOP

Trams are social

In our complex society there are complex networks of social travel.

SECOND STOP

Trams are treasured

Public transport in Melbourne cannot avoid its much-treasured tram network. An extensive track system winds its way through the metropolis and reminds us how Melbourne fits together.

THIRD STOP

Trams are historical

Trams are a part of the emergence of cities and their transport systems, a form of electrical rail transport for roads, with us since the second half of the 19th century. Trams are cousins to trains, an 'intermediate' form of transport that emerged in response to industrial demands for faster and easier worker movement.

FOURTH STOP

Trams are risk management

Safety has ever been important on trams – the red flag waver walking before the loco is part of our collective urban memory. Formerly the bell was rung as a signal from conductor to driver, a part of teamwork, managing risk. Even without conductors risk is managed with utmost care.

FIFTH STOP

Trams are leisure

Trams are also leisurely transport and serve on the non-working weekend to ferry sporting crowds to football, cricket, the races... . They are a popular form of public transport. Trams are not just a response to leisure; they form facets of our leisured lives.

SIXTH STOP

Tram travel and tickets symbolise our view of time

Routes and timetables of buses, trains and trams map patterns of urban life. Taxis and private vehicles are also part of the system. Formerly, a ticket indicated whether you were on a tram, train or bus. Nowadays, tram tickets tell you your location in a geographic sense, and a commuter can travel in and across all three modes within the time period specified on the ticket.

SEVENTH STOP

Tickets are eloquent in other ways

Tickets tell us other things about society. Buying and checking an electronic ticket is a highly regulated activity. The ticket is a mundane and routine symbol of the rich fabric of urban travel.

STOP EIGHT

Tickets reveal the system of public transport

Tickets purchased from machines mesh the authorisation for travel on train, tram and bus into one electronic strip with data that allows movement through the system.

STOP NINE

Tickets and ticket-selling have their own history

For 100 years conductors helped tram-travellers travel. Their work was co-ordinated with drivers and for some time Connies sold tickets and acted as inspectors. The tram ride is never a human-less process – and trams are important for many destinations other than work or play.

STOP TEN

Public transport bundles things together

When machines were devised which could bundle separate tickets together into one electronic strip, public transport could be integrated into one system. Now the ticket symbolises an *integrated* system, which solves some problems but creates new ones. The former system had its own form of efficiency. The Connie was safety officer, 'personal care attendant', compliance officer and bell ringer. These days drivers have a different role. Roving ticket inspectors check tickets, and questions of safety remain.

STOP ELEVEN

Tickets have always required mechanical production

Tram tickets, and all tickets, are refined artefacts. They are exhibits of a process of mechanical reproduction, a cause and consequence of the mesh of our social fabric. Tickets and ticket selling always involves machines at some point. They are numbered.

STOP TWELVE

Justice and economy are integral to efficiency

Justice – giving to each her/his due, and economy – wise distribution of scarce resources, are unpriceable norms of our humanness. Any transport system needs to be run in a way that embodies both.

STOP THIRTEEN

Tickets remind us that unpriceable and nonpriceable aspects are always attached to travel

The unpriceable aspects of tram travel were focused on the Connie before the implementation of the present integrated system. The Connie, giving public form to travel justice and economy, made friendliness and ‘trust’ part of travel. Unfriendliness is also unpriceable and if roving inspectors are often experienced as unfriendly, then policy needs to recognise the fact and find ways to form travel friendliness as a normative aspect of the structure for travel.

STOP FOURTEEN

Technological innovation requires renewal in communal co-responsibility

Of course facilitating friendliness, communal co-responsibility, is a norm for everyone. We might say it is the outer defining boundary of the work of public transport employees, and that is also why the Connie role emerged. For urban travel to be a pleasant experience many elements need to come together. A friendly ethos can only be formed over time – it is not automatic.

STOP FIFTEEN

Technicism as an ideology destroys social relations and distorts history

If an electronic ticketing system is formed with the assumption that a cash payment is the essential link between traveller and tram, then it is the transport policy itself which is creating tensions. The policy should be fostering public transport friendliness, in the context of justice and economy. ‘Trust’ roles, like that of tram conductors, must be re-conceptualised and the full character of social trust identified.

STOP SIXTEEN

Apart from dispensing tickets a mechanised system also makes its societal contribution

The machine retains people's money but a ticket owner has many reasons for travel. No-one will commute solely to possess a ticket. Commuters are also parents, schoolchildren, friends, shoppers, visitors, vagrants, businesswomen, elderly, tourists...with many things to do. The Connie had an educative function in reminding people they were not just abstract commuters. Connies helped form an ethic of mutual responsibility across the entire transport system, and now new ways have to be found to ascribe respect to tram travellers as humans with 'bundles of roles'.

STOP SEVENTEEN

Mis-calculation of the true cost has social consequences

To assume the cash nexus as the lynchpin of the transport system replaces justice and economy with the calculation of an abstract mechanical efficiency. Statistical data is needed for appropriate management of rolling stock and staff. But tabulating measurable performance indicators is but one facet of any review of service delivery. A transport policy's view of the social aspect of travel should not reduce it to abstract choices about physical movement.

STOP EIGHTEEN

Respect for the distinctive integrity of all forms of societal interaction is a good basis for a just and economic ticket system

Social policy needs to build respect for human interdependence. Travellers are never mere users – they board trams because they are going somewhere: home, school, shopping, the country, to catch a connection, to visit friends, or just going for a ride to get away.

STOP NINETEEN

Tram travel contributes to urban living by bundling us together in moving spaces that move us around

In an interdependent social fabric public transport systems enrich our lives by moving us from place to place and thereby contribute to work, commerce, sport, education, leisure, family, courtship and much more. Commuters are always 'going places' and trams are an important 'moving public place'.

STOP TWENTY

Public movement is political, economic, aesthetic and purposive

Public movement gives evidence of the way societal power is used to shape the life of the citizenry; gives expression to how we make use of personal and collective resources in terms of norms for stewardly use of resources; demonstrates the formation of an aesthetic fabric and life-style; and gives expression to how people view purposive behaviour and how they understand themselves as moving.

TERMINUS

Social interaction on a tram starts as a contractual agreement. The legal and financial aspects of a ticket purchase constitute the 'cash nexus' of public transport in a rich fabric of communal co-responsibility in which we care for our neighbours. Trams give multi-faceted support to us as we move around our variegated responsibilities in a complex differentiated society. The independence and inter-dependence of tram travel in public transport is a matter for ongoing reflection and action.

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