

Public Transport Users Association

Activity Centres

Program

Bus Route Audit

Revised 7 January 2025



**PUBLIC TRANSPORT
USERS ASSOCIATION**

Introduction

The Victorian Government has announced sweeping changes to planning controls, with the aim of increasing housing choices and diversity in established suburbs of Melbourne. As our city moves towards the population size of London, aiming to increase housing choices near high quality rail connections makes sense, however in order to provide quality public transport for these centres, better buses are sorely needed as part of the transport mix. Melbourne's rail network mostly caters for journeys towards the inner city, however in the middle suburbs, connections between local centres such as universities, shopping districts and other areas of employment are mostly accessed by the bus network.

Excluding 10 larger centres already in the planning phase, the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) have announced a further 25 centres for growth. The following bus routes serve each centre:

Buses by centre:

Carnegie	623, 626, 900
Hughesdale	767
Murrumbeena	627, 822
Oakleigh	624, 693, 625, 701, 704, 733, 742, 800, 802, 804, 862, 900, 903
Middle Footscray	216, 220, 223, 410, 411/412, 414, 472
West Footscray	216, 220, 411/412, 414, 472
Tottenham	220, 216
Hawthorn	609
Glenferrie	N/A
Auburn	624
Blackburn	271, 703, 736, 765, 901
Nunawading	273, 735, 902
Mitcham	270, 370, 736, 738, 740, 765, 901, 907
Toorak	604, 605
Hawksburn	603
Armadale	605
Malvern	N/A
North Brighton	626, 703, 823, 922
Middle Brighton	603, 626, 703, 811/812, 922
Hampton	708, 828, 922
Sandringham	600, 822, 922, 923
Tooronga Station	624
Darling Station	624
Gardiner/Glen Iris	612, 734
Toorak Village	605

Methodology

Routes have been classified into four categories based on the quality of service provided.

Good bus routes provide higher frequency weekday services roughly every 15 minutes or better, and provide 20 minute or better services during weekends. It is generally recognised that a service every 15 minutes during the week is best practice to meet the definition of a frequent service.¹

Fair services offer weekday services around every 20 minutes and weekend services mostly every 40 minutes or better. Fair services tend to offer more travel choices than lower quality routes but fall short of offering frequent services.

Low quality services tend to have less travel choices and make up a majority of routes, running roughly every 30-40 minutes during the week, and weekend services around every 40-60 minutes.

Routes classified as “poor” are hourly or worse, attract low patronage and have limited travel options. Any route which does not provide a full seven day service has also been rated as poor owing to the severe limitations this places on increasingly important weekend travel.

Route	Description	Weekday frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Classification
216	Sunshine - City	10-15 mins	15 mins	20 mins	Good
220	Sunshine - City	10-15 mins	15 mins	20 mins	Good
223	Yarraville - Highpoint	15 mins	15 mins	20 mins	Good
270	Box Hill - Mitcham	20 mins	30 mins	30 mins	Fair
271	Box Hill - Ringwood	30 mins	30 mins	60 mins	Low quality
273	Nunawading - the Pines SC	30 mins	60 mins	No service	Poor

¹ Walker, J. (2011) How frequent is freedom?, *Human Transit*, <https://humantransit.org/2011/12/how-frequent-is-freedom.html>

Route	Description	Weekday frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Classification
370	Ringwood - Mitcham	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
410	Sunshine - Footscray	15 mins	20 mins	60 mins	Fair
411/412	Laverton - Footscray	12-20 mins	40 mins	40 mins	Fair
414	Laverton - Footscray	40 mins	60 - 90 mins	No service	Poor
472	Williamstown - Moonee Ponds	15 mins	20 mins	50 mins	Fair
600	St Kilda - Southland *	15 - 30 mins	30 -60 mins	30 -60 mins	Fair
603	Brighton Beach - Burnley Station	20 mins	20 mins	30 mins	Fair
604	Elsternwick Station - ANZAC Station	20 mins	20 mins	30 mins	Fair
605	Gardenvale - City	20 mins	40 - 60 mins [^]	60 min [^]	Fair
609	Alphington - Hawthorn	Five daily services	No service	No service	Poor
612	Box Hill - Chadstone	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
623	Glen Waverley - St Kilda	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
624	Oakleigh - Kew via East Malvern or Carnegie	30 - 60 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
625	Chadstone - Elsternwick	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
626	Chadstone - Middle Brighton	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality

Route	Description	Weekday frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Classification
627	Chadstone - Moorabbin	30 mins	40 mins	40 mins	Low quality
693	Belgrave - Oakleigh	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
701	Bentleigh - Oakleigh	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
703	Brighton - Blackburn Smartbus	15 - 20 mins	30 mins	30 mins	Fair
704	Westall - Oakleigh	30 mins	40 mins	40 mins	Low quality
708	Hampton - Carrum	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
733	Box Hill - Monash University or Oakleigh	15 - 30 mins	30 mins	40 mins	Fair
734	Glen Iris - Glen Waverley	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
735	Box Hill - Nunawading	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
736	Blackburn - Mitcham via Glen Waverley	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
738	Mitcham - Westfield Knox	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
740	Mitcham - Vermont	Five daily services	No service	No service	Poor
742	Chadstone - Ringwood	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
765	Box Hill - Mitcham	30 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
767	Southland - Box Hill	20 mins	30 mins	40 mins	Fair

Route	Description	Weekday frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Classification
800	Chadstone - Dandenong	20 mins	30 mins	30mins	Fair
802	Chadstone - Dandenong via Dandenong Nth	40 mins	No service	No service	Poor
804	Chadstone - Dandenong via Wheelers Hill	40 - 60 mins	60 -120 mins	No service	Poor
811/812	Brighton - Dandenong	30-60 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
822	Chadstone - Sandringham	30 mins	40 - 60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
823	Southland - North Brighton	60 mins	No service	No service	Poor
828	Hampton - Berwick	20 mins	40 mins	60 mins	Fair
862	Chadstone - Dandenong via Stud Road	30 - 40 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Low quality
900	Rowville - Caulfield Smartbus	10-15 mins	30 mins	30 mins	Fair
901	Frankston - Melbourne Airport orbital	15 mins	30 mins	30 mins	Fair
902	Chelsea - Airport West orbital	15 mins	30 mins	30 mins	Fair
903	Mordialloc - Altona orbital	10-15 mins	30 mins	30 mins	Fair
907	Mitcham - City Smartbus	10-15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	Good

Route	Description	Weekday frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Classification
922	St Kilda - Southland *	60 mins	60 mins	60 mins	Poor
923	St Kilda - Southland *	60 mins	60 mins	60 - 90 mins	Poor

* Routes 600/922/923 operate a good service between Sandringham and Beaumaris however northern and southern branches of these routes are inconsistent and limit network legibility.

Outcome

Our analysis of transport networks in each of the 25 announced centres have highlighted that Melbourne’s bus network continues to fall behind, with most services offering a low quality service. Of 51 routes, only four offer a good service of every 15 minutes weekdays and 20 minutes weekends, which is only 7.8% of all routes. This stands in contrast to 21 routes (41.2%) offering a low quality service and 10 routes (19.6%) offering a poor service, with buses hourly or worse and, in some cases, offering no weekend services. Together, low quality to poor services make up almost two thirds of all buses serving areas proposed for higher density transport hubs. 16 routes (31.4%) are fair, offering improved services over lower quality routes however fall short of offering a good quality service.

Aside from buses, greater detail is needed about how rail services will be improved to transition towards a turn up and go network. In a media release by Premier Jacinta Allan on 20th October², it is stated that transport hubs will be centred around areas with high quality rail access, however only peak hour services were noted in the media release.

Melbourne’s population is set to double, and areas slated for additional growth need to have access to high quality public transport they can rely on, at all times of the week. Services that come every half an hour or even worse might have been appropriate in past decades, however numerous studies and patronage data proves that the better a bus service becomes, the more passengers it attracts. In October 2023, extra services were added to Fishermans Bend, and patronage data showed a 165% increase in weekend usage for the 235, again highlighting better service equates to greater transport access for more and more passengers.

Unfortunately as highlighted by our research, investment in establishing more frequent services every 15 minutes have been especially lacking, with most routes offering low

² Victorian Government. (2024, 20 October). *We Need More Homes Close To Train Stations And Trams* [Media release]. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/we-need-more-homes-close-train-stations-and-trams>

quality services, leading to limited travel choices, stagnating patronage and high levels of car dependence. Melbourne has already been given the title as Australia's most congested city, and our traffic problem will only continue to worsen if established areas become more populated without a cohesive vision to improve all modes of public transport in an integrated manner.

Our members are increasingly frustrated by infrequent buses, and especially a lack of weekend services to key destinations. The PTUA has long championed the need to provide more services more often across all routes, and once again calls for significant bus improvements to support growing suburban centres.



An example of under-resourced routes serving key destinations: Overcrowded weekend services on the busy 902 service, connecting popular destinations like Glen Waverley, Doncaster, Nunawading and Springvale.