

Public Transport to the Grand Prix

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Session Chair: Lindsay Richardson
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When Jeff Kennett made the announcement that Melbourne had the Grand Prix, after almost 30 seconds thought, they all shuddered. In the 1930s Albert Park was a tip and was turned into a park. The residents thought it was theirs, while Melbourne people said it was everyone's. Residents didn't want a grand prix through their park. The government decreed that there would be no car parking in a defined area around the grand prix track. Residents had to get a parking permit, and others such as delivery truck drivers had to get an access permit. There were criteria to meet to get a permit. Major advertising was brought in with catchy slogans such as 'No Albert Parking' to encourage people to use public transport. To get people to the track and do it safely, they had to:

- react quickly to breakdowns
- create St Kilda Road as an alternative to the light rail
- do infrastructure work to create a loop with light rail, Fitzroy St., and St. Kilda Rd. to provide an escape route for trams if anything went wrong.

The method involved:

- express running from Spencer St. to Wright St. and from Flinders St. to Albert Road in St. Kilda Road
- so called cattle pens to direct people onto trams

- staggered services so that the front tram travelled the furthest, the next tram travelled to an intermediate point, and the next tram travelled the shortest distance. This meant no delays by trams stopping to offload passengers.
- Factors to make it all work:
- Drivers were used to driving on their patch, and generally didn't know foreign tracks. They had to be trained up. To ensure they knew the route, they were issued with booklets covering:
 - the route map
 - overhead map showing where pantograph and pole cars could and couldn't go
 - order of Grand Prix events
 - parking restrictions
- use of express running with no cars or people to impede progress
- had to cover a shortage of drivers by asking them to work 5.5 hours without a break instead of 4.45 hours — 9.45 hours a day in all instead of 8 hours
- also they had to have drivers take meal breaks away from home depot
- there were negotiations with unions, as for 80 years the time worked between breaks had been 4.45 hours
- There were investigations to find a precedent. In 1956, the union broke the awards by working in excess of 4.45 hours by 5 minutes for the Olympics
- To break the award, the union members were offered \$20 an hour. This was rejected and \$50 an hour negotiated and accepted
- It was ensured drivers and other staff were fed nutritionally balanced meals to keep them capable of handling the extra work load. South Melbourne depot provided the meals with mixed success.

During the four days:

- at Spencer St. CO Ian Dobbs directed people, but in the hot weather, he and other senior managers wilted and CSE took over
- inspectors dispatched crowded trams
- traffic lights were either switched off and manned by the police or synchronized to the tram speed
- trams ran at 60 kmh at 10-second intervals
- infrastructure had been upgraded
- on all trams power unit switches were switched on

Twelve months of planning, training, tram priority work, upgrades of power supply, signage etc. preceded the event. The trammies wanted to show up Mr. Kennett and show what public transport could do. Sixty two percent of all people travelled by public transport. Fifty one percent of corporate stand ticket holders such as MD of Holden Special Vehicles used public transport because they couldn't park their cars anywhere at the track. 400 wheelchair bound people attended using public transport.

The event was concurrent with Moomba and the system was stretched to the limit:

- early on Thursday morning, people who worked at the Grand Prix were waiting for trams
- inspectors and managers from depots looked after their staff so that drivers met a familiar face.
- St. Kilda Rd. running came unstuck because not everyone wanted to go to the Grand Prix. Some people wanted to go to work or Moomba
 - on Thursday, trams weren't stopping at all tram stops and running express

- after that trams stopped all stops but took an hour to get to Melbourne University instead of 17 minutes
- people worked at St. Kilda junction for 14 hours straight because they knew how to run it and didn't want to give up their patch
- tram staff had power to direct police and had them close Swanston Walk

The first day had steady demand as people only visited for short periods rather than all day. There were more people on the second day and they had to react fast to handle the traffic. So B2s from Preston were replaced with Zs on Bundoora, to replace them on Grand Prix services. There were no complaints and everyone cooperated, so it happened.

On Sunday there were big crowds:

- Bass stuffed up as Gate 5 ticket holders were directed to Gate 1 the corporate entrance. The GP people wanted the ticket holders taken back, but they were forced to admit them.

On Sunday night, John Farnham entertained the crowds so not everyone tried to leave at once. There was still a big rush. Clarendon Street shopkeepers who had applied for extended trading hours and hired extra staff missed out as trams flowed by and nobody stopped. This was the only complaint received.

Trams travelled at high speed through auto points instead of stopping, but the points didn't fail all weekend. This was despite drivers holding their own 'grand prix' comparing times and speeds! There was a tram breakdown, but RIO reacted so fast that the following tram never knew as the tram had already been pushed towards the Spencer Street Remand Centre shunt. Overhead repair crews were on standby in the same area. There was a squeeze point for trams where people gathered when hessian did not go to the top of the fence and was pulled down.

Lessons for next time:

- services on the light rail/St Kilda Road loop will be extended
- No. 12 trams were replaced with buses but passengers were not told. LSEs informed people
- Moomba crowds were not moved
- thousands were stranded in the city as they could not catch last trams due to overcrowding. They are considering 24-hours running for the first time in many years
- drivers found new ways of getting trams back to Preston and Camberwell depots. The Monday public holiday is needed to move trams back to their home depots. The next Grand Prix will not be on a long weekend. The government will have to declare a public holiday to get trams back on Monday.

Questions

Les Withington: is it good training for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney? Yes. The Lesson is to make public transport friendly and free of cars. You have to get people out of cars.

Warren Doubleday: what changes will there be next time? There will be no South Melbourne depot producing accessibility problems. St Kilda Road will be handled differently. Melbourne University people will get a proper service.

Len Millar: did the PTC and Jeff Kennett express appreciation to staff? Yes. Managers without operational experience were forced out of their ivory tower. They were met with awesome sight of vast crowds and only four trams. But more were only 3 minutes away and no breakdowns had been reported.

Trevor Dennhardt: why was it held over the Moomba weekend? An extra day was needed to bring trams back to depots. Jeff Kennett had asked for the race to be held on that weekend.

Lindsay Richardson thanked Jim McCrum.