



AUSTRALIAN TIMETABLE ASSOCIATION

TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

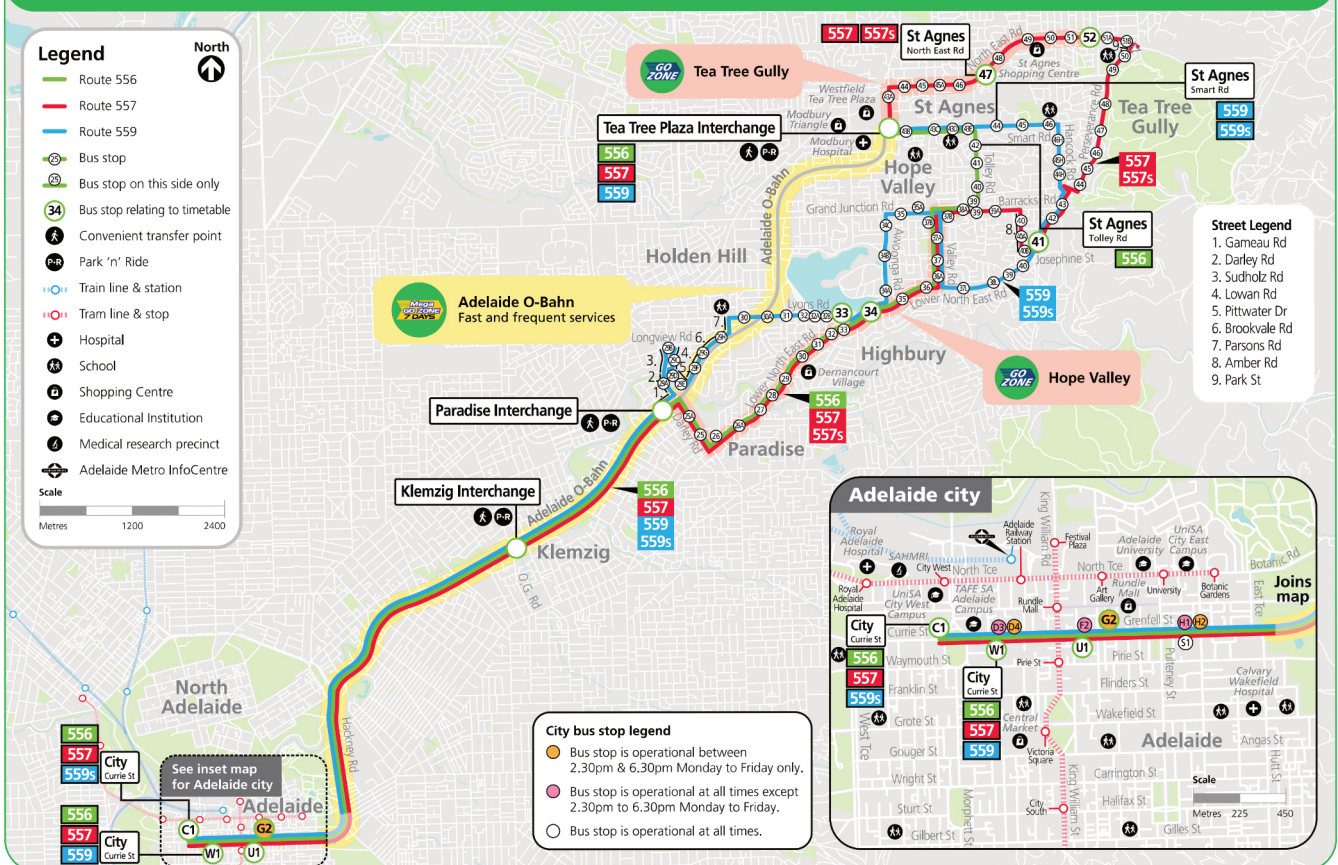
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RAIL & TRAM NEWS

NATIONAL



Inland Rail

Hundreds of people are expected to lose jobs following the handing down of a report in April scathing of governance and project management at the multi-billion dollar Inland Rail project.

Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) reportedly commenced the process of downsizing its project workforce in late August, while some workers had already resigned ahead of the move.

Whilst the "nation-building" project between Melbourne and Brisbane was expected to be completed in 2027 at a cost of \$10 billion, this timeframe has blown out at least five years, while the estimated final cost has tripled.

The national Labor government is prioritising the section between Melbourne and Parkes, located in western New South Wales, with the future of the remainder of the project unclear, reports *The Brisbane Times*.

A spokesperson for ARTC said "To achieve [Melbourne to Parkes], Inland Rail is now looking to get the right operational capacity and organisational structure in place for the future of the project. Over the coming weeks, Inland Rail management will be engaging with our workforce to determine our future resourcing requirements and make the required organisational changes by later this year. Inland Rail will be offering appropriate support to employees impacted by the organisational changes being made to our workforce."

The Brisbane Times also reported that according to ARTC annual reports, the 14-member "key management" team received combined bonuses of \$1.5 million in 2021 and \$1.1 million in 2022, with board members paid about \$83,000 each annually.

Source supplied by GEOFF LAMBERT

Source THE BRISBANE TIMES

NEW SOUTH WALES



State Budget 2023/24

Following on from the election of a new state

government earlier in the year, the delivery of the State Budget was delayed until September.

Key transport election funding commitments over the coming years included \$303m for rapid bus links to serve the new Western Sydney International Airport under construction, \$200m to expedite the second stage of the Parramatta Light Rail project to provide a branch out to Olympic Park, and \$300m for additional transport access upgrades.

Key funding for the 2023/24 financial year includes:

- Sydney Metro West - \$2.86 billion
- Sydney Metro Sydney and Southwest - \$2.41b
- Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport - \$2.38b
- More Trains, More Services - \$681.6 million
- Rail Station Upgrades ("More Accessible, Safe and Secure Train Stations") - \$537.4m
- New Intercity Rail Fleet - \$429m
- Parramatta Light Rail - Stage 1 - \$182.4m
- New Regional Rail Fleet - \$151.4m
- Opal Next Gen ticketing - \$80m
- Fixing Country Rail - \$56.9m
- Parramatta Light Rail - Stage 2 - \$41.3m
- Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport - planning for Stage 2 - \$38.5m
- Main Western Line Capacity Enhancements - \$16.2m
- Local Manufacturing of Replacement Train Fleets - \$10m
- Western Sydney Freight Line and Intermodal Terminal - \$4.4m

NSW GOVERNMENT

Bankstown line closedown

The T3 Bankstown line had another two-week school holiday closedown from Saturday 23 September to Thursday 5 October, with provision for replacement bus services in line with previous closures. The TfNSW announcement specifies that replacement buses will be Opal-enabled, with passengers required to tap on and off.

Over the fortnight, some timetable alterations also occur to Sydney Trains T2 Inner West Leppington and T8 Airport East Hills line services.

During these two-week closures, there is normally one weekend where the closure extends through to Cabramatta - in this instance that occurred on 23/24 September.

Looking ahead, a major four-week closedown is scheduled over the New Year break, while the next two-week closedown is pencilled in for the April school holidays. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW, SYDNEY METRO, SYDNEY TRAINS**

Fare adjustments

The new state Labor government has finally revealed upcoming fare increases for the public transport network which will come into effect from Monday 16 October with an average 3.7 per cent increase to most fares. While changes, which normally come into effect in July, often remain as simple as such increases to regular fares, these set of changes includes some interesting changes.

Reflecting the changed nature of peak travel post-pandemic, off-peak fares (which excludes ferries as that mode does not have them) are set to be charged all day on Fridays with the weekend daily fare cap also in place on Fridays. The move is expected to lead to increased patronage on Fridays. Airport station access fees also increases by almost a dollar per entry/exit.

On the other side, the Opal travel benefit of half-price fares after eight journeys in a week (counted Monday to Sunday) is withdrawn. Transport for NSW says that the number of customers making use of the 'half-price after eight journeys' benefit has almost halved compared to pre-pandemic.

There are no changes to the weekly and other daily fare caps, including the \$2.50 daily cap for senior/pensioner cards. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW, NSW GOVERNMENT**



Melbourne: Delays/Cancellations report

The Sunday Age reported in mid-September on service reliability across the Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM or Metro) network in the 12-month period ending 31 August this year. A link to the full article is provided at the end of the article, with a condensed version provided below.

Commuters on Melbourne's least reliable train lines are experiencing more than three times as many delays and cancellations than those on the city's most reliable lines, according to Public Transport Victoria data. MTM measures on time running as those services operating at least five minutes late or one minute early.

The state government spends about \$786 million a year under its current contract with MTM, which includes a 92 per cent punctuality target and a 98.5 per cent reliability target, meaning less than 1.5 per cent of trains can be cancelled, skip stations or run short. The data shows that Metro met these benchmarks over the past 12 months with a network-wide average of 92.5 per cent punctuality and 98.7 per cent reliability.

More than 1-in-10 trains on the **Craigieburn** (11.9 per cent) and **Werribee** (10.7 per cent) lines were unreliable, while **Frankston**, **Sunbury** and **Belgrave** trains were also delayed more than 8 per cent of the time. However, the **Stony Point** line (running between Frankston and the eastern side of the Mornington Peninsula) was

Metro's worst performing service – 14.7 per cent delayed, 5.4 per cent cancelled. However, it is an outlier on the network given it operates with diesel V/Line trains on an infrequent timetable. On the other side, only 3.2 per cent of **Glen Waverley** line trains were delayed.

The **Glen Waverley** line also had the least outright cancellations (0.6 per cent), while almost four times as many trains were cancelled on the **Pakenham** line (2.2 per cent) and more than double on the **Frankston** (1.5 per cent) and **Werribee** (1.4 per cent) lines.

Public Transport Users Association spokesperson Daniel Bowen said it was not good enough for Metro to simply pass its network-wide average targets when passengers on some lines experienced substandard service - "If as a passenger you're getting constantly delayed on your journeys, that can have a real impact. The fact that some lines are suffering almost 12 per cent of services being delayed and the best lines are only around 3 or 4 per cent does indicate that more attention needs to be paid to the worst lines."

A Metro spokesperson said unsafe and illegal activity such as trespassing and vandalism disrupted 1,635 services within the month of August alone and was the biggest factor hurting its performance, causing more than one-third of delays and cancellations - "We are working hard to minimise disruptions for our passengers and deliver the consistent and reliable service that they expect and deserve."

Mr Bowen said that overcrowding was also a major cause of delays as it took longer for passengers to board and alight at stations. Older trains still running on parts of the network were also more prone to breakdowns, he said.

Rail Tram and Bus Union Victorian branch secretary Vik Sharma said maintenance demands and understaffing were also putting stress on the network - "Avoidable delays put unnecessary additional burden on staff who are overworked to keep the network running".

A Victorian Auditor-General's Office report released in March this year found that within the month of November 2022, "external factors" such as weather, vandalism and police operations caused about 3 per cent of trains to be delayed. Infrastructure failures caused 2 per cent and passenger overcrowding caused 1.5 per cent.

Metro passengers are entitled to compensation if performance falls to 90 per cent punctuality or 98 per cent reliability in any one month. But to be eligible a customer needs to have bought a myki pass for a month or longer and must submit an application form within that calendar month to claim the one or two days of free travel.

Source supplied by **ROSS MORRISON**

Source **THE SUNDAY AGE**

Yarra Trams: Service changes

The Age newspaper reports that a revised Yarra Trams timetable will come into effect on 29 October.

Adjustments will include additional services along the Swanston Street corridor on weekday evenings to alleviate overcrowding, with routes to operate every 15 minutes, instead of every 20, while there is a slight reduction in daytime frequency.

The weekend route **3a** diversion via St Kilda's The Esplanade introduced in 2009 will be wound back. Its removal will roughly halve services from St Kilda to Swanston Street and Flinders Street railway station.

The article cites planning document which state that there may be alterations to route 16 services "to optimise service connections".

Meanwhile, W-class heritage services (free route **35/City Circle**) will be halved with trips around the CBD to only operate in the clockwise direction.

Source supplied by **ROSS MORRISON**

Source **THE AGE**

Stoush over track standards

The Victorian state government and Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) are in a stoush over the source of extra funding required to maintain the North East Rail Line track infrastructure at Class Two standard.

Line maintainer, ARTC, says that it will let the standard of the recently upgraded line drop back to 'freight standard' unless the state government begins contributing. ARTC says it expects the Victorian state government to help fund maintenance of the line at the higher and more expensive standard required for V/Line to optimally operate its Albury line services.

In August, ARTC formally requested what it considers to be a "reasonable increase" to the track access charges paid by V/Line. ARTC says that since the upgrade it has committed additional funding to maintain the line at the Class Two standard, while the Victorian state government has "not deviated from its historic position to not contribute" to increased rail access charges and line maintenance fees. It says it continues to engage with the government, as the operator of the passenger services, to contribute towards the maintenance of the line at the higher standard.

Border Rail Action Group's John Dunstan said "It's just so stupid to spend \$300 million or so on capital works and then turn around and let it deteriorate again and come back to the way it was - you've wasted your money". He said that ARTC were only involved in freight operations, and the request was reasonable.

A state government spokesperson said that under the terms of the line lease, ARTC was responsible for maintenance along the line.

Source supplied by **GEOFF LAMBERT**

Source **THE AGE**



Transport patronage

ABC News reports that use of public transport services has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels in South Australia.

Total trips across the state's services in July this year were 13 per cent lower than the level recorded in July 2019.

ABC News provided the below department data numbers, which shows that the rail network with the largest decline, while the tram line has almost returned to pre-COVID numbers.

	2019	2022	Change
Train	1,294,782	1,027,527	-20.6%
Bus	4,023,153	3,502,783	-12.9%
Light Rail	783,769	761,467	-2.8%
Total	6,101,704	5,291,822	-13.3%

State transport minister Tom Koutsantonis said "We're seeing more seniors and pensioners use the system because it's free now for them all the time, but we're not seeing that work cohort come back in the same number as pre-COVID. We're bringing the trains and trams back into public hands, we're increasing security, we're decarbonising our fleet, we're electrifying our rail lines, so we're doing what we can."

Dr Andrew Allen, senior lecturer in transport, urban and regional development at the University of South Australia, said that Adelaide has amongst the highest levels of car dependency post-pandemic. **ABC NEWS**



Perth: Free travel

The state government granted free travel across Perth's public transport network on Sunday 24 September to mark the 40-year anniversary of the America's Cup win.

Meanwhile, with the start of the 18-month closure of the Armadale/Thornlie line on Monday 20 November, the state government also said it would enable free travel for six months for 'regular commuters'.

To achieve this, eligibility is restricted to SmartRider users with at least one trip per week on an Armadale/Thornlie line service for 13 weeks of travel (non-consecutive) over the past six months. No registration is required, with the 'token' automatically applied to eligible cards for travel from 20 November to 31 May next year.
PERTH NOW, RAIL EXPRESS



Australind alterations

The Armadale/Thornlie line closure will also impact Transwa's Australind services, with replacement road coaches to operate between Bunbury and East Perth. Passengers will be provided a 50 per cent discount on their fares during the closure period on the Australind replacement service.

There will be a two-tiered replacement coach service available for each train normally scheduled:

- A regular all stops coach
- A limited stops coach (East Perth, Kwinana, Waroona, then all to Bunbury or v/v)

As per the regular rail timetable, replacement coaches only stop at intermediate stations when bookings to/from those stations have been made (excludes Kwinana and Armadale).

The limited stops service stop at Kwinana allows for direct interchange with Mandurah line trains for travel into Perth CBD.

The timetables are currently available at: transwa.wa.gov.au/tickets-times/train-timetables.
TRANSWA

NEW ZEALAND



Wellington: May disruption Review

A 'rapid review' has been conducted following the disruption in early May to Metlink rail services caused by the non-availability of a track evaluation vehicle which caused widespread track speed restrictions and led to around half of all train services being cancelled (*Table Talk*, June 2023, p. 6).

Stuff Online reports that the review found "a culture of decision-making being pushed up the 'chain of command' rather than problems being solved at the level they are created and observed".

The review also suggested replacing the 40-year-old vehicle which it said was "fundamentally age expired, unreliable and suffering from availability limitations due to the difficulty of securing and rostering trained staff".

Transport minister David Parker said "I am advised that, following this review, KiwiRail has already fixed specific failings that led to the track evaluation car not completing its assessments on time, which caused commuter chaos." **STUFF ONLINE**

Auckland: Ticketing cyber incident

Auckland's AT HOP public transport ticketing system fell victim to a cyber incident in mid-September, causing the online top-up and other HOP-related online services to go offline, while station ticket machines were only accepting cash payments.

Auckland Transport (AT) said that it had to rebuild part of its online AT HOP system before those facilities could resume, while during the nearly one week timeframe, passengers could continue to use transport services even if they had insufficient funds on their HOP Card.

A spokesperson for AT said "Investigations into the cyber incident are still ongoing, and at this stage, AT still believes customer data, including financial data, has not been compromised." **STUFF ONLINE, NZ HERALD**

INTERNATIONAL

Ireland: Upcoming new timetable

Irish Rail intends to introduce a new timetable on Sunday 10 December. It has now released a draft for public consultation.

The operator writes that key highlights of the draft timetable include more services on Cork, Carlow, Westport, Portlaoise, Mallow and Drogheda routes, services making additional stops at Clara and Ballinasloe, new services and extended Commuter services as well as improved journey times and enhanced performance.

It says in particular that the DART weekend timetable has been completely revised to increased reliability, while provision has also been made for Heuston and Phoenix Park Tunnel services to serve the new station being constructed at Kishoge, due to open next year.

Looking forward, further DART improvements are expected over coming years from the DART+ project which will deliver electrification for Dublin commuter services and help provide increased service levels, while pattern-based timetables will also be rolled out to support this.

Source supplied by **PAUL BROWN**

Source **IRISH RAIL**

UK: Docklands light rail

Transport for London is currently re-tendering its 38-kilometre automated Docklands Light Railway franchise, consisting of 45 stations across east and southeast London. The existing contract with a Keolis/Amey (70/30) joint venture will end on 1 April 2025.

The line was operated by Serco between 1997 and 2014, which lost out in the 2014 re-tender.

The new operating and maintenance contract will be for an eight-year term with option for an additional two years with a combined value of £2.3 billion (\$AU4.4 billion).

TfL says that key objectives for the new franchise will include continuing to drive a recovery of post-pandemic demand and supporting improved environmental standards while there will be both performance-based incentives and deductions.

Transport for London and the British government say that they have already invested in 54 new CAF trains to commence operating next year which will increase capacity, with expectations of improved service from that investment.

The railway recorded around 120 million passenger-journeys pre-pandemic. *INTERNATIONAL RAIL JOURNAL (2)*

Sweden-Germany service improvement

The seasonal overnight rail service between Stockholm and Berlin will now run year-round, according to operator SJ, due to high demand.

Initially only operating during the months of April through to September as an extension to the year-round Stockholm-Hamburg service, the Euronight operator says that demand from both business and leisure travellers has been greater than expected.

SJ's business manager, Christer Litzell, said "This is really good news, travellers have shown great interest from the start in travelling to Berlin with Euronight. We have also seen more travel than we expected from German travellers who take the train to Sweden. In Germany, the line has received a lot of attention. Thanks to a new agreement with our German partner, we can also continue to run a daily service over the entire distance to Berlin." *INTERNATIONAL RAIL JOURNAL*

Thailand: Monorail expansion

In the Thai capital of Bangkok, trial running has commenced on the monorail Pink line. Until the commencement of revenue service on 1 November, people can travel on the service for free.

The line has 30 stations along 34.5 kilometres, with another line (Orange) under construction which will enable interchange between the two lines at Min Buri station. Interchange is already possible to the existing Purple line at Nonthaburi Civic Centre station.

The Yellow line also recently opened with 23 stations. There are various other transit lines across the city.

Pink line operator Northern Bangkok Monorail said that it had completed testing earlier than anticipated, so has decided to open its doors to passengers early. *INTERNATIONAL RAIL JOURNAL*

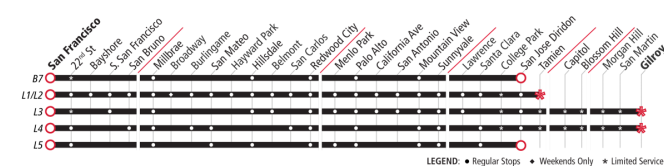
US: California electrification and new TTs

Rail operator Caltrain has announced it has completed the installation of 2,569 overhead wire poles for its 51-mile electrification project, the upgrade to its signalling system, and its new Stadler electric trains at a maximum speed of 79 miles per hour (127 kilometres per hour) along the nearly 160-year-old right-of-way. Electric passenger services are scheduled to commence in our Spring next year.

Caltrain says that more frequent and comfortable services will result from replacement of its 30-year-old diesel trains with electric rollingstock.

Caltrain has a new weekday timetable effective from Monday 25 September, which it says will better align with the new BART schedule (effective 11 Sept) at Millbrae, provide reduced journey time for local trains in the evening, provide an additional Gilroy return trip as well as adjusted stopping patterns/times for pre-existing services, and also includes temporary adjustments with selected trips skipping Tamien to accommodate daytime works on the Guadalupe Bridge Rehabilitation project.

A stopping pattern diagram is provided below:



Source provided by PAUL BROWN

Source CALTRAIN

ENDS

BUS & COACH NEWS



Yeerongpilly closure

As part of the ongoing Cross River Rail project,

Yeerongpilly railway station was closed from Monday 18 September. The station will reopen late next year.

Local route buses operate from bus stops on Green Street (around 60 metres away), as the Wilkie Street bus stops have also been closed.

StationLink 109 bus services (Rocklea-PA Hospital) are available for passengers to travel to adjacent train stations. **TRANSLINK**

Toowoomba: Kan-go service

Toowoomba's hybrid fixed/roam Kan-go service became a fully On Demand service on Monday 25 September. This means that all passengers now need to pre-book their travel.

Previously, the route consisted of a partially fixed route and remainder roaming 'On Demand' hybrid service.

Operating hours have been extended slightly - now 07:30-17:45 weekdays and 09:00-13:45 Saturdays.

This follows the same change occurring to Hervey Bay's Kan-go service back in February (*Table Talk*, March 2023, p. 9). **TRANSLINK**

NEW SOUTH WALES



State Budget 2023/24

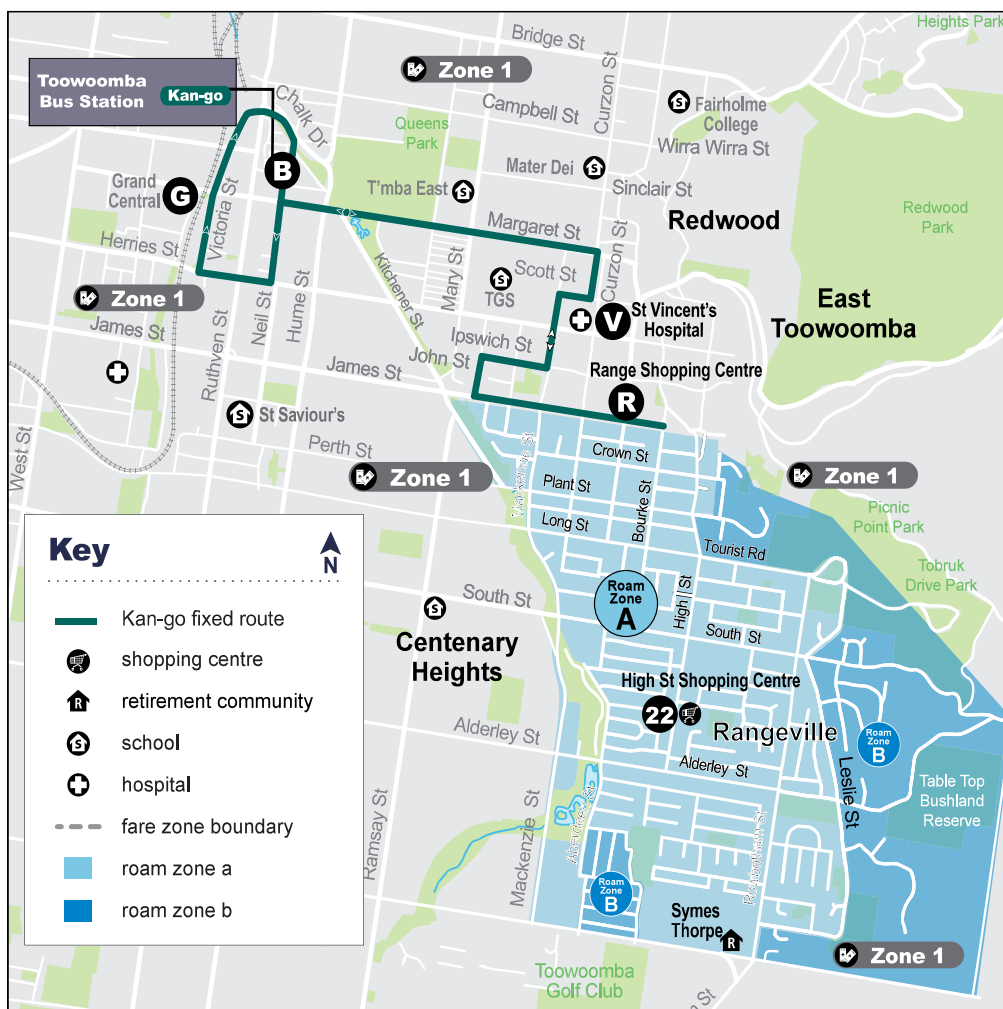
Following on from the election of a new state government in March, the delivery of the 2023/24 State Budget was delayed until September.

Key bus funding for the new financial year includes:

- Western Sydney Long Term Strategic Transport Corridor Preservation - \$142.9m
- Zero Emissions Buses procurement - \$140.5m
- New buses - \$101m
- Rural and Regional Ticketing Solution - \$29.2m
- Bus Priority Infrastructure - \$25.8m
- SCATS Customer Improvement Program - \$19.7m
- Macquarie University Transport Interchange - \$18.4m

Kan-go

Route map



Kan-go service travels a fixed route between the City Centre and Range SC via St Vincent's Hospital, then picks up and drops off pre-booked passengers in **Roam Zone A (light blue)** as close to your door as we Kan-go.

If you live in **Roam Zone B (darker blue)**, the Kan-go booking team will advise you of the closest pick-up/drop off point when you call to book your travel. Kan-go will pick you up or drop you off at this nominated point.

This point can be changed by phoning the Kan-go booking team **1800 231 248**. Travel in the Kan-go roam zone is hourly. **Monday to Friday 7.45 am to 5.45 pm, Saturdays 9.45 am to 1.45 pm.**

Kan-go Roam Zone - **To book your travel on the Kan-go, you must first register by phoning the Kan-go booking team on 1800 231 248 (FREE CALL) at least one hour before travel and quote the trip number.**

Former Toowoomba Kan-go route map including roam zones A and B (source: Translink). A revised map was not found by publication.

- Transport Connected Bus Program - \$11.6m
- Reinstatement of bus route to Menai High School - \$1m
- Restore route 445 - \$1m

NSW GOVERNMENT

Region 10

A reduced timetable continues to operate across the Region 10 network. Operator U-Go Mobility says it has been struggling with an insufficient number of drivers to service its contracted services, which range from regular route services to school trips, NightRide and occasional rail replacement work.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) said in early September that since the commencement of the region's second temporary timetable on **31 July**, U-Go's ad hoc average weekday cancellations have reduced from 400 trips per weekday down to 86 - a reduction of nearly 80 per cent. The transport minister and TfNSW continue to advise in communications on the issue that more work is required by the operator to improve the service offering to its contractual requirements.

The operator has been further assisted by shedding some services onto adjacent bus operators. Since **August**, selected services from its contracted NightRide routes **N10, N11 and N20** have been sub-contracted to other bus operators "when needed". It is unclear whether this is done on a night-by-night basis based on driver and asset availability, or whether a particular number of trips have been carved off over a longer period of time. As of mid-September, online data continues to show all trips as being operated by U-Go.

From **mid-August**, Transit Systems took over the operation of 18 school bus services, which TfNSW says has been done on a temporary basis to improve their reliability.

Effective from Sunday **10 September**, all trips on bus routes **940, 452, 453, 953 and 954** were "temporarily" transferred to Transit Systems region 6.

Then from Sunday **24 September**, bus route **M92**, a cross-regional route operating between Parramatta and Sutherland was split in half:

- **920** (Parramatta to Bankstown)
- **960** (Bankstown to Sutherland)

The new route 920 was handed over to Transit Systems region 3 from the same date, which resolves U-Go's need to service significant dead-running required between its region 10 bus depots such as Kingsgrove and Menai with early trips commencing from Parramatta. However, route **915**, which operated with a handful of peak-hour trips on weekdays between Lidcombe and the southern education precinct (including the TAFE and the University of Sydney campus) was withdrawn from after last service on Friday 22 September.

All of this is while TfNSW's own staff have been deployed to help the operator deliver to its contract.



(Source: User 'bus909'/Bus Australia forum)

Meanwhile, a September state government announcement had this notable line - "Hard copies of timetables have been issued to MP Electorate Offices to provide to constituents" - presumably as a measure to improve customer service for passengers impacted by the turmoil. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW, NSW GOVERNMENT, BUS AUSTRALIA FORUM**

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) has approved Transit Systems to temporarily take over the operation of some public bus services, to improve their reliability. In addition, TfNSW is making changes to the M92 bus route from Parramatta to Sutherland from Sunday 24 September.

Public services

From 10 September 2023, Transit Systems will temporarily operate the following 4 public route services, which will run according to the current timetable.

- 452
- 453
- 953
- 954

For any urgent issues involving the operation of these services, please call Transit Systems on (02) 8778 5815. We have already notified schools of these changes and we will be in touch again when these services revert back to U-Go Mobility operation.

M92 bus route

The M92 route currently takes approximately 100 minutes to complete, which creates delays for passengers as well as scheduling inefficiencies. The long route also requires more drivers, which are at a critical shortage across Greater Sydney.

The M92 will be split into two new routes: g60 (Sutherland - Bankstown) and the g20 (Bankstown - Parramatta). This will improve journey reliability for passengers and allow drivers to complete other routes impacted by driver shortages.

Passengers travelling the full length of the route (Sutherland to Parramatta), will be required to change buses at Bankstown.

At Bankstown Central, route g60 (towards Sutherland) departs from Stand E and route g20 (towards Parramatta) departs from Stand C. These are only a short walk away from each other.

For ease of transfer, customers are encouraged to use Bankstown Station to transfer between services.

At Bankstown Station, route g60 (towards Sutherland) departs Stand B and route g20 (towards Parramatta) departs from Stand E. These are only a short walk away from each other.

U-Go Mobility has worked with Transport for NSW to ensure timetabling of the two new routes means passengers will only have to wait a maximum of 15 minutes for their adjoining service.

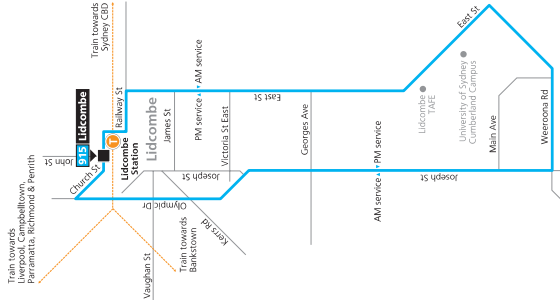
Letter extract - September changes to U-Go Mobility services.



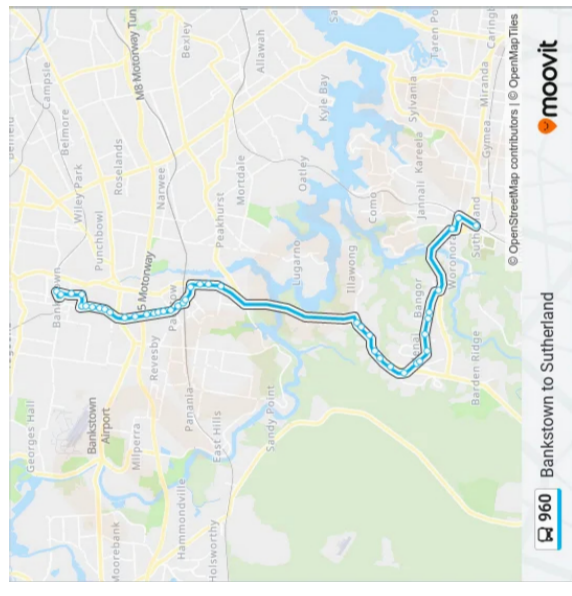
Timetable improvements

Revised Transport Canberra bus timetables come into effect on Monday 9 October, which is the first day of the year's final school term.

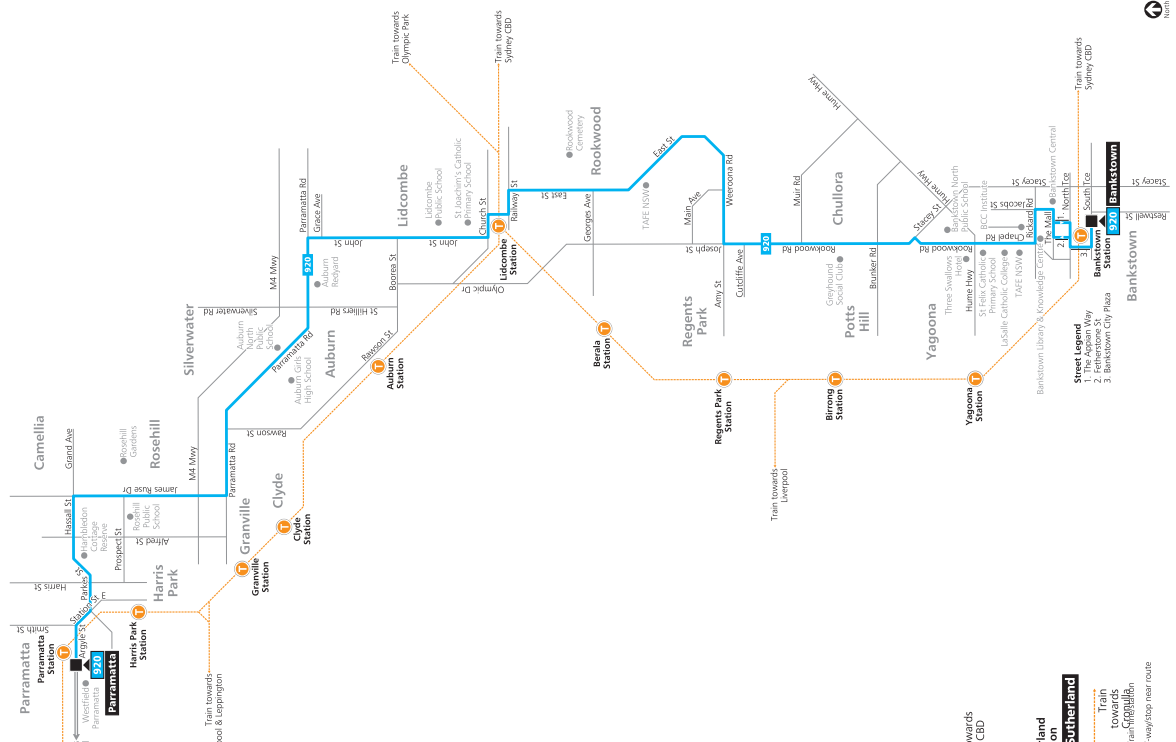
Improvements centre around better frequency



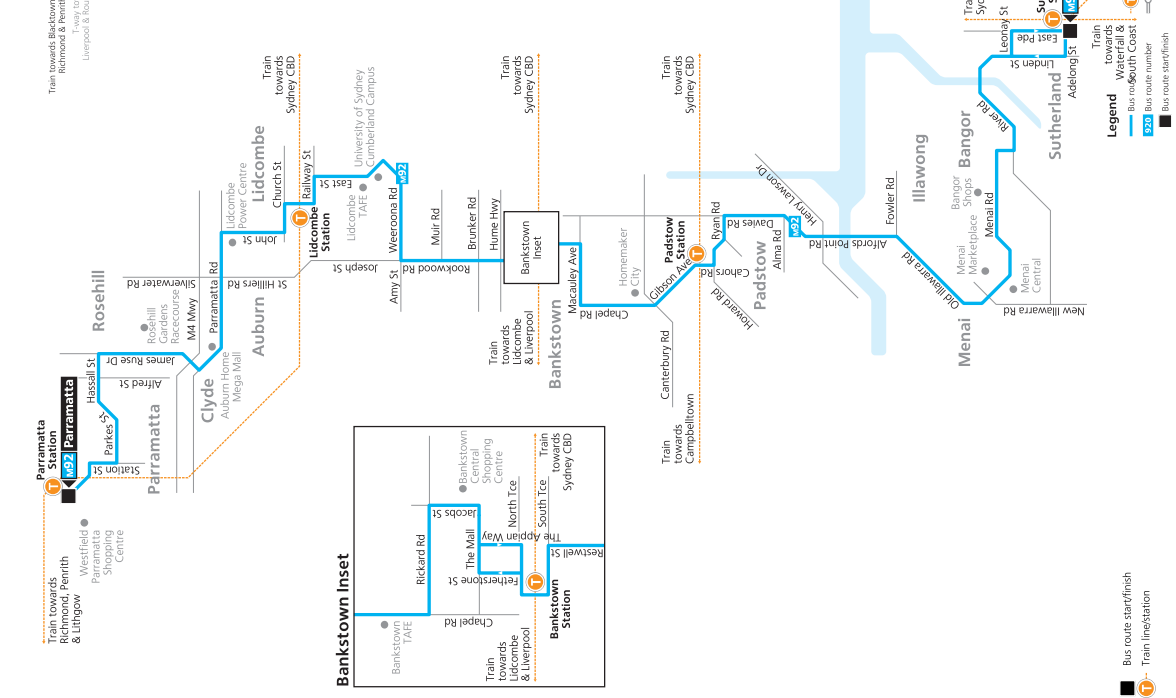
Former 915 route map (above)



New mapped route 960
The new 960 route map was not available at time of publication so an alternative is provided from Moovit.



New 920 route map
The new 960 route map was not available at time of publication so an alternative is provided from Moovit.



Former M92 route map

bus services on weekdays, with most routes operating at least every 30 minutes during the day. Service frequencies had been previously reduced due to driver shortages.

The update has resulted in some changes to times for the first and last services operating on some routes. Previous reductions with late night and weekend services remain, reports *Canberra Times*.

A full 313-page document of each public route service, titled Regular Services Timetables Booklet. For our digital readers, it is accessible through [this link](#).

Additionally, Transport Canberra reports that 14 school services have been revised as a result of stakeholder feedback and changes to some school bell times.

On the labour shortages, Transport Canberra deputy director-general Ben McHugh said the operator was losing 80 to 90 drivers a year, but recruitment had since picked up allowing the frequency of services to be increased at this time, while Transport Canberra now has around 1,000 drivers on its books. *TRANSPORT CANBERRA, AGNES BOSKOVITZ, HILAIRE FRASER, JOHN ABRAMS, THE CANBERRA TIMES*



Eastern suburbs adjustments

Effective from Sunday 18 October, some adjustments come into effect for eastern Melbourne bus services, which PTV says will simplify the network while boosting services to key locations such as Deakin University.

The changes include:

- Improved services on route **766** with extra services on Saturdays, improved operating hours, and now also runs on Sundays; route **201** with a new all-day 15-minute service frequency; route **271** to operate on Sundays for the first time; and SmartBus route **903** has additional short-working trips on Saturday mornings.
- Path changes for SmartBus route **903** to now operate via Deakin University and regular route **766** to operate closer to Union railway station. **281**'s route has been reduced to only operate Templestowe-Box Hill station, although it now has extended operating hours.
- The withdrawal of route **768** due to low patronage and duplication (with resources redeployed into boosted route 201).

The timetables became available on the PTV website on 15 September.

Source supplied by *HILAIRE FRASER*

Source *PUBLIC TRANSPORT VICTORIA*

Fisherman's Bend improvements

Also from Sunday 15 October, some local services around Fisherman's Bend have been adjusted, with a reported 460 additional trips to now operate each week.

Routes **235** and **237** instead run to/from Southern Cross railway station; improved peak frequency to a bus every 8 minutes on each route; and extended operating hours courtesy of services now operating from around 06:00 through to midnight (with trips every 20 minutes after 21:00). On weekends, 235 buses are to now operate with improved service frequency (every 20 mins) between 06:00 (07:00 Sundays) and midnight.

An additional 60 trips to operate each week along route **215** (Caroline Springs-Highpoint Shopping Centre).

Minor adjustments also come into effect on routes **216**, **220**, **223** and **234** to improve reliability by reflecting "current traffic conditions". *PTV*

Melbourne: New operating franchises

Further detail has been provided regarding seven new operating contracts set to commence from 1 July 2025.

The state government says the procurement process is an important step in delivering holistic bus reform across the state.

Called Metropolitan ZEB Franchises, the new 10-year contracts aim to further consolidate operational areas as well as transition entire bus fleets to 'zero emissions' and transfer ownership of such buses and assets (i.e. depots) to state government ownership by the end of the 10-year period. There is also intention for a transition period between old and new contracts to minimise service disruption from the handover.

The new contracts are expected to be awarded by mid-2024. *PTV*



Hobart: Service reductions update

While a reduced timetable is now operating across Metro's Hobart bus network, as reported in last month's edition of *Table Talk*, there continues to be some late notice service cancellations, although these are significantly lower now. For example, on Friday 8 September, there was a list of 15 cancelled trips, with 14 of those between 14:00 and 19:00. The number was zero for Thursday 14 September, however 35 trips were listed for the following Thursday.

Meanwhile, in mid-September Metro advised that routes **522**, **530** and **x30** had resumed operating

their regular route after recent temporary diversions caused by anti-social behaviour along Gage Road. **METRO TASMANIA**

Free Metro services

The Greens political party introduced a bill into parliament to make Metro Tasmania provide its services for free to passengers. Along with the usual benefits touted by providing free public transport services, the party indicated the move to make Hobart, Burnie and Launceston buses free would cost the state government around \$11 million in additional subsidy required annually. This would be on top of the nearly \$60 million in annual funding that the government supplies to Metro Tasmania.

The state's transport minister, Michael Ferguson, said such a move would cost \$17.4 million a year, assuming no extra services were provided to account for any additional patronage. However this figure reportedly includes the entire state in the equation, rather than just Metro services as other regional bus services are operated by private operators.

The bill was defeated by the two major parties on 13 September. **ABC NEWS**



Tea Tree Plaza Interchange

Since 1 August and until Saturday 16 December, Adelaide Metro advises that some bus services through Tea Tree Plaza Interchange may experience minor delays due to local Park 'n' Ride & Busway Access Road upgrade works with a detour for buses that normally use the Smart Road entry or exit. See image right. **ADELAIDE METRO, SA DEPT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT**



Fremantle CAT

After the publication of last month's *Table Talk*, Transperth confirmed that the free Fremantle CAT service will end on Saturday 30 September.

From Sunday 1 October, additional trips commence operating along route **532** to help fill the gap, with daytime services now operating every 15 minutes. Transperth says that major

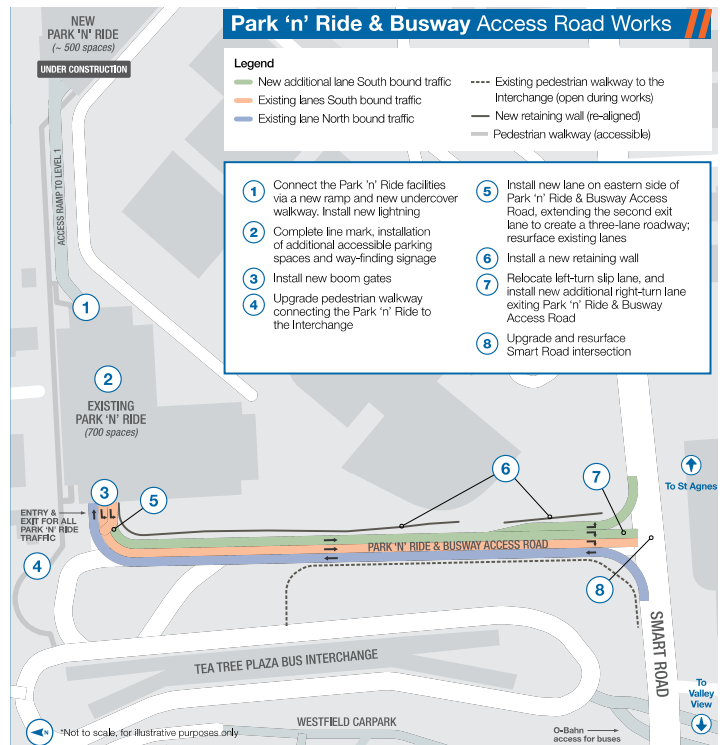
time changes also occur to existing trips on the 532 and new short-working trips will run between Fremantle and Hampton/Clontarf Roads.

As part of the timetable update, a deviation via Spearwood Primary School has been withdrawn. **HILAIRE FRASER, TRANSPERTH**

Perth: Further timetable adjustments

From Sunday 1 October, buses on routes **511, 512, 513, 520, 530, 531, 532, 548, 549** and **999** serve an additional stop in Fremantle (stop 10453 - South Terrace after Market Street).

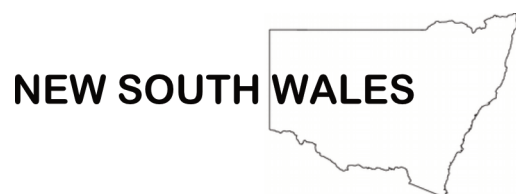
Meanwhile from Monday 9 October, School Special bus 705 is withdrawn due to low patronage, with SS 704 available for affected students. **TRANSPERTH**



Adelaide's Tea Tree Plaza Interchange works.

ENDS

FERRY & SHIP NEWS



Manly Fast Ferry joins Opal

Transport for NSW announced on 12 September that the Manly Fast Ferry route (Circular Quay-Manly) would properly join the Opal network from Sunday 1 October.

The change sees fares reduced from premium rates to be in line with regular Opal ferry fares, as well as the inclusion of Opal benefits such as the travel caps and other applicable discounts.

New Opal ticket gates are being installed at both ends of the route in preparation for launch on 1 October. *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

State Budget 2023/24

Following on from the election of a new state government earlier in the year, the delivery of the State Budget was delayed until September.

Key funding for the 2023/24 financial year in the Budget includes \$17.9 million for the Transport Access Program (Commuter Wharf Upgrades) and \$16.5 million for the return of Freshwater Class Ferries to Sydney Harbour operations. *NSW GOVERNMENT*

NEW ZEALAND



Auckland: New operator found

In good news for ferry commuters, agreement has been made for Explore Group to temporarily take over running of the **Birkenhead**, **Northcote Point** and **Bayswater** route services from 1 October, with some timing adjustments to be made to the timetable.

Explore Group says that it will use a near-new vessel from Australia it is currently getting refurbished to provide services from late October. To cover the gap, it is using a vessel from its existing Bay Of Islands fleet, called Discovery IV.

Explore Group operates tourist services in the Whitsundays region in Queensland.

Explore Group's managing director, William Goodfellow, said regarding the refurbished vessel "We are currently modifying her to improve her capacity as a commuter vessel - including increasing bike storage and providing accessible access." Mr Goodfellow said Explore's expansion was a natural next step for the company.

Special replacement bus routes for the already announced Half Moon Bay and Gulf Harbour ferry reductions from the same date are as follows:

- **FBHM** - Half Moon Bay-Panmure station stopping all stops only between Half Moon Bay and Pakuranga Highway.

- **FBGH** - peak trips Gulf Harbour-Downtown via Manly, Plaza Shopping Mall and Fanshawe Street.

STUFF ONLINE, AUCKLAND TRANSPORT

ENDS

AIR NEWS

DOMESTIC



Rex flight reductions

Seven of nine routes which have had temporary flight reductions since May this year (*Table Talk*, June 2023, p. 17) will continue for at least another five months, Regional Express confirmed on 22 September.

Rex has announced it will further reduce its regional services due to labour shortages for its Saab 340 fleet, in particular blaming "relentless pillaging" from Qantas Group in its announcement.

From 30 October, service reductions take effect on **Sydney-Albury**, **Sydney-Coffs Harbour**, **Sydney-Griffith**, **Sydney-Narrandera**, **Sydney-Orange**, **Sydney-Parkes**, and **Sydney-Port Macquarie**, while the **Sydney-Armidale** route has been suspended outright.

Additionally, the four remaining flights per week on the **Cairns-Bamaga** route in Far North Queensland will be removed, marking Rex's withdrawal from that route, while the suspension of **Adelaide-Mildura** flights continues.

These changes are currently scheduled until 30 March next year.

Echoing the management of labour shortages by much of the bus industry post-pandemic, Rex's general manager of network strategy, Warwick Lodge, said "Unlike other carriers, we prefer to reduce the scheduled services so that our passengers can be assured of fewer disruptions and more reliable services. We intend to return to the standard flight schedules from 31 March 2024 - however this is subject to the situation improving".

Source provided by ROSS MORRISON

Source REGIONAL EXPRESS



World's Top Busiest Routes

Samchui.com reports on the world's top ten busiest routes in international aviation, based on seat capacity of flights (in brackets, rounded to nearest thousand) in the month of August this year.

- 1) Hong Kong-Taipei (426,000)
- 2) Cairo-Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (416,000)
- 3) Kuala Lumpur-Singapore (408,000)
- 4) Seoul-Tokyo (365,000)
- 5) Seoul-Osaka, Japan (361,000)
- 6) Jakarta-Singapore (360,000)
- 7) New York-London (359,000)
- 8) Dubai-Riyadh (352,000)
- 9) Bangkok-Singapore (304,000)
- 10) Bangkok-Hong Kong (301,000)

Further detail is available on the source link for digital readers: SAMCHUI.COM

ENDS

TALKING IN-DEPTH

Kentucky school timetable 'disaster'

While troubles plague U-Go Mobility services in southern Sydney which led to widespread reports of cancelled school trips, missed stops, delays of up to an hour for some students, and even some buses turning back to pick up stranded students, on Wednesday 9 August, an overhaul of school district bus services came into effect in Louisville, Kentucky which was arguably worse.

A total overhaul of bus routes for Louisville's school district turned into a logistical meltdown on the first day of classes because the new plan created too steep a learning curve for the system, district officials said [on 11 August], forcing administrators to cancel two days of classes and leaving parents and state legislators fuming.

It took just one disastrous day for Jefferson County Public Schools leaders to completely re-examine the transport plan for Kentucky's largest district, which serves 96,000 students. Some kids arrived home hours late on Wednesday, and classes were cancelled Thursday and Friday.

The district spent \$US199,000 hiring and deploying a new bus routing system designed by

AlphaRoute, a Massachusetts-based consulting company that uses computer algorithms to map out routes and stops. The district says that it has 65,000 bus riders, while around 70 per cent of students use the network for travel to/from school.

In pushing for the overhaul, Superintendent Marty Pollio had said that the district simply could not keep up with its then-current routes because of a labour shortage - it did not have enough drivers to cover all routes, leaving thousands of students losing school time as some drivers made double and triple runs. Even after increasing driver pay and cutting routes, the district still did not have enough drivers, and students continued to arrive and depart school late all year long, he said.

The district opened an online comment form for the new bus routes on 24 July. It received thousands of complaints from parents concerned that their children would have to walk too far to catch the bus or that bus stops were located at busy, unsafe intersections. Various school bell times were also changed to accommodate the new plan.

"There was a big learning curve," district spokesperson Mark Herbert said of the failed plan.

Mr Herbert said that with two days of classes now cancelled, the district commenced a review of all bus routes and bus stops for efficiency and took steps to improve communications, while bus drivers used both days to practice the routes.

Mr Pollio called it a "transportation disaster" in a social media video and apologised to students, parents, the drivers, as well as the school officials who stayed with students for hours waiting for buses that day. He said the decision to close schools for the following two days was the most difficult of his career but said it was necessary.

Frustrated parents said they wanted to see quick results. Beau Kilpatrick has five kids attending schools in the district but said the only major transport problems were with his elementary-school aged children, two girls in the first and third grades. He said the morning bus was supposed to arrive at 08:38 but never came, then after 30 minutes of waiting, he drove them to the school a few miles away.

In the afternoon, the bus was almost two hours late for pickup. Mr Kilpatrick said the children had to sit in a school hallway while waiting for the bus to arrive because the cafeteria was already full. Then the children weren't dropped off until three hours later, at 21:15. "They were hungry. They were thirsty. They couldn't use the bathroom. They were scared because they just wanted to get home," he said - in short it was a "complete failure".

In a news conference on Monday 14th, Mr Pollio said one significant deficiency was that the recommended routes weren't accounting for the latest information, saying while AlphaRoute gave the district the new routes earlier in the summer, but since that time, thousands of stops had been added as new students enrolled ahead of opening day or parents requested a different bus stop - "When stops are added to routes, we did not properly add the time that was needed for a bus driver to complete that", explaining that those extra minutes were adding up. "We had some room for error in our former schedule. We do not have room for error now," he said.

At one school board meeting on the Tuesday after the meltdown, parent frustration swelled, with one mother saying "it was horrible because I had no clue where [my son] was".

A group of state lawmakers representing Jefferson County districts called it "the last straw", saying the debacle "must be the catalyst for change" in the school system.

The lawmakers signalled that they will push for legislation ensuring that students have the right to attend their neighbourhood schools. They called for a commission to evaluate splitting up the school system, contending that the district currently is "too big to properly manage", and called for changes to the local school board.

In a step towards rebuilding trust in the system, Mr Polio said the district also aimed to have a mobile app that parents could use to track their child's bus location.

Meanwhile, AlphaRoute reportedly had similar issues in Columbus, Ohio in 2022, with real-world problems getting in the way of its technology's ability to save money and smooth

out complex routes. The local school district found it was unable to quickly adjust routes using the software, leading to the early cancellation of a three-year \$US1.6 million contract.

In Cincinnati, the local district had said it "was not satisfied with the results and had to reroute and physically evaluate each stop".

Aaron Schechter, a professor of information management systems at the University of Georgia said that automation bias (where people are prone to overly trusting the abilities of automated systems, from factory robots to ChatGPT, and what happened in Louisville) fits into a broader problem with the use of artificial intelligence technology.

Mr Schechter said that while students having to walk long distances to bus stops early in the morning might have been "algorithmically correct" because it satisfied the objectives and constraints of the algorithm under Kentucky law, "in reality parents would not want their kids walking that far at 6am" **PBS NEWSHOUR, NBC NEWS, CBS NEWS, FORTUNE**

Front Cover: A route map showing Adelaide's 556, 557 and 559 (courtesy Adelaide Metro). These are some routes not directly impacted by the Tea Tree Plaza Interchange diversions (story page 11).

About Table Talk

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