

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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### ABSTRACT:

*This paper describes the background and research involved in a project to evaluate the public awareness of public transport in Melbourne. It outlines the philosophy of public transport as an integral part of the community life of any urban environment, and with this as a background describes in some detail an approach to the measurement of public awareness. It includes a very broad definition of the 'public' to include 'citizens', leaders in the community and employees of the public transport organisation. Results are then presented which show the effect of presenting the public with information about the role of public transport in the community and the ensuing significant increase in positive perception of the system and its function.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of public awareness of a public transport system is of major importance to all transport authorities charged with the provision of public transport to the community. In essence, if a large sector of the public is not aware of the system and all the services which are offered, a choice either for or against the system cannot even be realistically made. And if lack of awareness were to go hand in hand with negative perceptions of the system, a choice, even if it were possible, would be uninformed, at a minimum. The research reported in this paper is directed at addressing this issue by a comprehensive examination of the public awareness of public transport in the city of Melbourne. While it has been widely recognised that transport cannot be considered as a "product" in the same way as soap or milk, it is believed that the implications in terms of the different components of "awareness" have never been as fully researched as in the study reported in this paper.

## 2. THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

### 2.1 Background

In the last year (1983/84) the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) has introduced significant improvements to Melbourne's public transport system. In the light of a concern that there have been inadequate public understanding of these initiatives, and of their impact in improving the standard of public transport services in Melbourne, a study of the public awareness of metropolitan passenger transportation was undertaken.

The necessity of basing this study on empirical evidence was of prime concern to the MTA. In line with the approach, the brief for this project clearly specified the need to obtain an understanding of the role of public transport in Melbourne.

This paper describes the research which was carried out to achieve this aim. It includes details on the public understanding -- in the broadest sense of the definition -- of the scope and the role of public transport in Melbourne and on the public's expectations.

With the input from 10 sectors of the community (transport zones called Neighbourhoods), it provides comprehensive understanding of the level to which people are informed about the system and the type and components of the interactions which can achieve a better acceptance of the community perspectives of public transport in the future.

A nine cell categorisation of passengers in terms of system experience (regular users, and non-regular users who believe they have good or poor knowledge of the public transport system), and satisfaction levels (satisfied, dissatisfied, or indifferent towards the system) was designed to achieve a better understanding of the impact of changes in the system and changes in perspectives.

The definition of 'public' in this paper is extended to include people in some sectors of the public who have a special understanding of public transport, or whose organisations depend rather significantly on it. The

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combination of results from this wide range of members of the public is, therefore, the basis for the understanding of people's perception of the role of public transport in Melbourne. In order to set in context the approach taken to this public awareness study, the next sections review public transport in perspective. The conceptual design of the study is then described before some detailed results are presented.

### 2.2 The Significance of Public Transport in the Community

The public awareness study was addressed from an international perspective, taking into consideration the fact that the significance of public transport as an integral part of urban life is one of the primary goals of public transport planners and policy makers the world over. Some of the most important reminders of this aspect of public transport are:

- o The world cannot simply be divided into public transport users and users of other modes. Many people sometimes use public transport -- even those who usually drive or usually get a ride, or those who drive everywhere except in the city itself.
- o Roads are often thought of as the domain of cars and trucks, but people using public transport (buses, trams) share the roads with those people using private transport.
- o The use of public transport can be seen to have a community benefit in addition to individual benefits. It is necessary to realise that, whereas it may be possible to maximise individual benefits by encouraging (allowing) the exclusive use of the non-public transport modes, this would not maximise the community benefit in any way -- and would finally be detrimental to the individual as well (overcrowded streets, slow speeds, street-filled environment). Public transport, therefore, already plays a very important role for both the users and the non-users.
- o One of the aspects of public transport which reinforces its character as an integral component of urban life is its role in environmental considerations. By contributing to the restriction of unlimited car use, public transport allows the development of people-oriented -- instead of car-oriented -- planning and policy making (e.g. pedestrian zones, residential precincts). It will also have a significant effect on the overall reduction of air pollution and noise levels.
- o Public transport plays a role in the safe movement of people from one point to another. Again, by providing an alternative to car travel, it limits the number of cars on the street network, thereby indirectly increasing the safety of those persons not using the system. Studies on road exposure in The Netherlands and West Germany show that the risk of injury or fatality when using a car is 50 times higher than when using public transport.
- o One of the community benefits of public transport is its role as a "social service" for some sections of the population. In some cases it provides a base level of mobility for people (of low income), the young, the old, the disabled) who could participate in only very limited out-of-house activities without it. European studies (e.g. Brög and Ribbeck, 1984) have shown that the disable use public transport about twice as often as able-bodied persons.

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- o The role of public transport in the labour market cannot be overlooked. In many cases it provides the commercial, retail, and industrial sectors with ready access to large groups of employees and customers or clients. It is complementary to the market forces which encourage the agglomeration of many facets of commercial and retail activities (i.e. it carries many more people to a central area -- such as the CBD -- than would be possible if the car were the only alternative mode). As such, public transport is certainly an integral component of urban living.
- o In addition, the operation of the public transport itself creates employment opportunities for people with a wide spectrum of skills within the community.
- o Not as readily obvious, but perhaps equally important, is the role that public transport, particularly trams, play in helping to form Melbourne's urban identity and in the Melburnian's concept of 'my city'.

At an international level, the community as a whole tends to underestimate the magnitude of the public transport task. The thoughts of a local politician highlight this perspective (which is strongly substantiated in Melbourne), namely, that public transport has a much larger benefit to the community than is usually acknowledged.

Mayor Vogel, the Mayor of Munich who has become known world-wide for his broad thinking which has led to initiatives such as the pedestrianisation of large areas of Munich, the introduction of the S-Bahn, and the choice of Munich as an Olympic City, was asked at the time when man first walked on the moon if he was impressed.

Yes, he replied without hesitation, but not as much as by the ability of a city to carry 200,000 people on public transport every day of the week.

### 2.3 The Need for an Integrated Perspective in Planning for Public Transport

There are many cases where it has been shown (e.g. Hannover - Brög, 1984) that when public transport is seen as an integral part of urban life, and that when an appropriate approach is taken, it is possible to achieve significant changes to the existing mode split. This section takes a look at the characteristics which underly this type of "appropriate approach".

An integrated approach, which is likely to have a positive effect on the perceptions of public transport, needs to consider the following aspects:

- o Each time a mode of transport is given preferential treatment, it could be considered that a new group of disadvantaged is created, i.e. those using or reliant on other modes. It is necessary, therefore, to develop an integrated concept which takes into account all modes of getting from one place to another.
- o Since a growing proportion of travellers has several mode alternatives, and these people are no longer the captives of one mode, the traditional supply-oriented thinking (from the transport system perspective) needs to be expanded to include much more demand orientation (from a (potential) user perspective).

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- o The greater freedom of choice of mode means that travellers are more likely to be able to realise their preferences, and the ensuing variability of their behaviour has to be considered in any research analyses.
- o Since in many cities or countries there are signs of a general change in value systems, exclusively statistically-oriented (hence descriptive) analysis procedures -- however sophisticated they may be in mathematical terms -- are not sufficient to explain the present or to reliably forecast the future.
- o Since it is important to understand general basic attitudes, it is not sufficient to conduct superficial attitudinal studies (see below). The advantages of the (educative) interactive measurement approach, used in this project to overcome this problem, are detailed in Section 3.
- o Since the attributes of public transport travel are frequently perceived incorrectly, extensive efforts must be made to increase the level of information about it as well as to improve the subjective attitudes towards it. Here it is recognised that conventional techniques of product marketing are not appropriate.
- o Since mode choice is only a partial determinant of out-of-house activities, these activity patterns must be observed continually.

An integrated management perspective, therefore, needs to be included in the interface between (potential) demand, (transport) supply, and the urban environment. But transport planning cannot be done in a vacuum. The integrated perspective needs to consider the importance of public transport in the political arena.

### 2.4 The Political Asepts of an Integrated Perspective

It follows, then, that it is not possible to have an integrated perspective of public transport by focussing only on public transport as a product competing with other products. In many respects, travel with public transport will never be as "good" (e.g. comfortable, intrude as little on personal space, etc.) as the car. As already noted, its importance lies not only in its function as a benefit to, and an integral part of, the whole community.

This makes the vital importance of an integrated political view easier to understand. It is only the product, 'public transport' which is offered, then it appears as if it only has importance for those who use it, or are being encouraged to use it in the future. Its contribution as a component of urban living in general, however, means that it is essential to reach a stage where not only the mode itself is seen in a positive light, but also the encouragement of the mode is seen as a positive contribution to community well-being. In other words, not only the product, but also the concept, must be seen favourably. This 'political' emphasis gains importance when it is noted that in some countries where the public transport product has been promoted before improvements to the system had been implemented city-wide, the newly generated 'demand' (increased patronage as a result of the advertising campaigns) has been disappointed and has sometimes been lost for a long period (French, R. 1984)

3. THE CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

The project design used to gain the information presented in this paper is based on both international experience and desk research. Its aim was to investigate the influence of transmitting information about the community aspects of public transport to the 'citizens'.

3.1 Problems of Attitude Measurement

The approach used in this research took into consideration two factors with regard to attitude measurement. First, it is still widely disputed among psychologists whether it is possible to measure attitudes at all (e.g. Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). And even when attitude measurement occurs, the use of the commonly used method of group discussions has many disadvantages -- the most outstanding of which is the unrealistic environment and, hence, reference frame, in which the attitude reporting occurs.

The traditional market research approach shown in Figure 1 makes a series of assumptions, many of which are very difficult to support. First, it assumes that existing attitudes are actually measurable. Then, it is hoped/assumed that these attitudes will change as a result of an advertising campaign. It is further hoped or assumed that these changed attitudes will achieve an increase in patronage -- incidentally, usually without consideration of whether this growth would/should occur in the peak or off-peak, on all modes, and so on. The reason why this study did not concentrate on this type of attitudinal approach can be summarised as follows:

- o Attitudes expressed in a survey are not binding; no-one will check if you actually hold the attitude.
- o They are not behaviour-related. Many regular public transport users may have very negative attitudes to public transport, while many persons who always drive have very positive attitudes.
- o Measurement of individual attitudes alone is not done in the situational context -- i.e. the life situation in which these attitudes occur is not known and the interviews take place away from it.
- o Since public transport cannot be seen purely as a product or consumer good, the general "public attitude" as an indicator is not appropriate -- as may be the case for soap powder or milk.

When the conservative attitude measurement approach just described is applied to group discussions (as is frequently the case) additional problems are created. Group discussions serve to measure the process of opinion formation and not to measure attitudes. Since, in addition, the measurement of attitudes depends on the (very critical) assumption that an individual is able to express himself in the way requested, a very clear frame of reference must be provided by the design of the survey instrument. This is counter to the nature of the group discussion in which the conversation dynamics of the moment create a critical momentum. In this respect,

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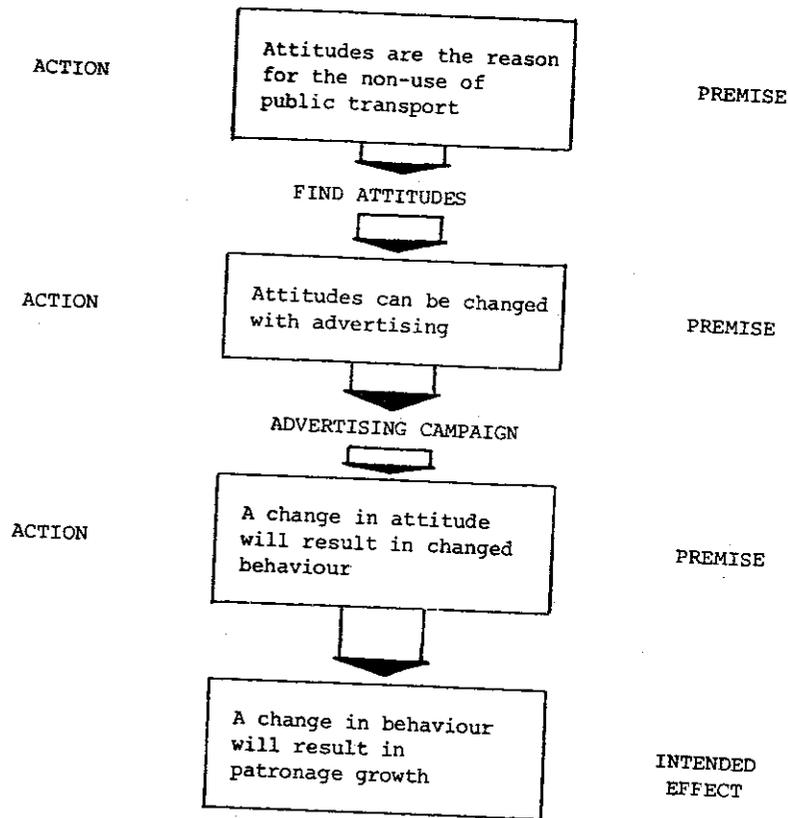


Figure 1: The Conservative Approach

The group discussion is, indeed, interactive, though not in the sense in which interactive measurement is understood. In the latter case, interaction serves to identify an individual's behavioural options, and, thereby, to define the area within which attitudes play a role. In contrast, the theme used in a group discussion needs a clearly defined focus such as that which can be used in an individual or household interview.

Finally, the small number of persons who usually comprise the groups are often further divided into categories by user type, age, sex, employment, Neighbourhood, and so on. This means that it is generally impossible to have a correct representation of the population. Some important population segments are not represented at all, or only by a single person, or by an imbalanced distribution of the population -- making inferences very questionable.

The benefit of the design used in this study is not only that it overcomes these problems, but that it allows the inference of the effects of policy measures which could be introduced to address deficits in public awareness -- which is, of course, of particular importance to public transport authorities.

3.2 Who is the "Public"?

Broadly, "the public" is made up of people who live in the world around us -- and includes us. All the people who combine to form this "public" have different activities as the central theme of their lives -- for some it is home, for some school, and for some work. Theoretically, the public transport system is available to all members of this public. Not everyone takes this opportunity, however, for many reasons. Some reasons, like physical handicap, or the need to carry large, heavy goods at certain times, are straightforward and easy to understand. Other reasons are much more difficult to understand at first glance. Some of these are related to an individual's past experience, beliefs (true or false) about the system, or lack of knowledge about timetables. Still other reasons are related to the behaviour and perceptions of other people in the public who subtly (or not so subtly) shape the way in which public transport (as well as many other things in life) are perceived. The "others" in the public who, for some reason, have an influential role in this respect are people who play an important role in our modern industrial society like politicians, the planners, the retailers, the teachers, the television personalities and so on.

In a public awareness study it is, therefore, very important to address as many elements as possible of the public in their different roles. For this reason a multi-phase approach was developed:

- o The 'citizens' -- a two phase survey of a sample of people from all over Melbourne.
- o The 'experts' -- detailed discussions with 25 leaders in the community or representatives of particular community sectors.
- o The MTA employees -- a brief self-administered interview with a sample of MTA employees.

After a brief discussion of all three phases, more detailed results of the 'citizens' survey' is given in Sections 4 and 5.

3.2.1 The citizens' survey - a 2-stage approachStage I

A sample of 1200 persons (gross) was selected randomly from the Melbourne metropolitan area. For each person, a short personal interview took place (at home). This acted as a type of screening interview to classify people according to "system experience" and "satisfaction with the system".

Stage II

From the first sample a subsample of persons was drawn to represent both system experience and level of satisfaction. For these persons in-depth interviews using an interactive measurement technique, the backbone of which was an educative element, were carried out with all members of the household.

The two applications of the interactive measurement technique (Brög and Erl, 1980) which were relevant to this study were:

- o the technique allows for the representation of behaviour in a social context (i.e. within the household or family).
- o it breaks through the barrier of interviewees' perceptions by making them interact with the interviewer (used in the educative aspect).

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The current perception of the public transport system and its role as an integral component of urban life was studied using this approach. The in-depth interview passed through several (interactive) stages:

- o First, the respondents were asked their spontaneous reaction to public transport.
- o Then, the first level of interaction occurred. This was done in the form of a multiple-choice quiz which each respondent was asked to complete independently of other household members. Basically, the quiz provided respondents with system information (e.g. route kilometres).
- o Next, further information was introduced, again in quiz form. This time it was passenger information. Again responses and changes in perceptions were recorded.
- o Finally, the concept of benefits at a community level were introduced with the quiz providing community information on benefits such as the non-polluting nature of public transport, and its energy-saving properties.

The purpose of the educative interactive measurement process was to observe people's reactions to different levels of information (i.e. reactions to an 'education' process. To this extent it was possible to consider the interviews as a kind of mini-test for a prospective public awareness campaign which would essentially transmit this sort of information to the community at large.

### 3.2.2 Expert Interviews

The role of the expert discussions in the study was to help in determining the level of the community perspective of various key persons in the community. These people were selected either because they represented groups of people for whom public transport is a very important factor in day-to-day life, or because they were perceived to be in relatively strong positions in their ability to influence attitudes or policy decisions.

These explorative in-depth discussions centred on both their "corporate" opinions and beliefs and on their own personal understanding of the public transport system in Melbourne.

### 3.2.3 Employee Surveys

A subsection of the expert interviews was a group of surveys of the employees of the Metropolitan Transit Authority. The aim of interviewing these persons was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of the public transport system by these people for whom it is not only a means to reach activities or to travel, but for whom it actually provides a source of income.

A self-administered design was chosen as the optimal technique which allowed for both structured answers and for comments related to their perceptions of the system and their role as providers of that system to the general public.

4. IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY

4.1 Community Importance

One of the central hypotheses to be tested in this research was that the community role of public transport in cities such as Melbourne (where public transport has a tradition) has an important place in the minds of all citizens, including non-users. Consequently, the following question had particular relevance:

"In your opinion, what is the importance of public transport in the day to day activities and the community life of the people in Melbourne?"

It was important because the sections of the interview which followed were designed to be the bases of a public awareness campaign -- and this question was asked again at the end of the interview. The responses were much clearer than expected (Table 1).

	TOTAL %
o Public transport is an extremely important part of community life; it should be supported more.	60
o Public transport is important, but there are other problems in the community as well.	30
o The importance of public transport is over-estimated; however, it should not be neglected.	8
o Public transport is no longer important, and public money should definitely be used in other ways.	1
No answer	1

Table 1: Assessment of the Importance of Public Transport to the Community

Since respondents had already spent about half an hour discussing public transport at this point, it could be argued that the nature of the interview itself had stimulated interest in public transport, and that the estimates reported in Table 1 are too positive. To a certain degree this could be true, although this does not alter the fact that even under other circumstances, at least 3 out of 4 respondents chose the first (positive) two statements. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the interview technique used -- self-administered response and interactive measurement -- ensures that the respondents (can) express their actual opinions and that "acceptable" answers which often occur in demoscopic surveys are generally avoided. It appears especially important for the validation of

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these data that the majority of the non- or rare users expressed the same level of positive feelings towards public transport. In other words, information which emphasises the community role of public transport is relevant even to the non-regular user -- whereas, by contrast, the persuasive approach often leads to "emotional rejection" and effectively harms the cause of public transport.

In this context it is also important to know that the majority of the citizens felt that the importance of public transport had increased in the last 12 months (Table 2). This means that the extensive efforts of the government and the MIA to improve public transport, although not fully recognised, had led to a perception that public transport is becoming more important.

	TOTAL (%)
o Public transport is generally considered more importance	49
o Nothing has really changed	40
o Public transport is generally considered less important	7
No answer	4

Table 2: The Importance of Public Transport in the Last 12 Months

### 4.2 Desired Future Planning Directions

In this sense the wants of the respondents in terms of future developments are also positive for public transport (Table 3). Here too, the limitations mentioned in Section 4.1 are applicable, although the opinions expressed in these answers, especially when compared with each other, are relatively clear: Public transport should be supported, even if it leads to a deficit. A high priority was not given to road construction (which was considered so important in the last decade) by the majority of residents.

It was particularly interesting that over three quarters of the respondents expressed the wish to receive more information about the importance of public transport in the community (e.g. the number of passengers carried, the environmental benefits, etc.) This has to be seen in relation to the high evaluation of public transport as an integral part of community life, and, in effect, means that it is possible to maintain a very positive approach to public transport in the community.

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FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS WANTED	Definitely (%)	I don't care (%)	Definitely not (%)	Rate*
o More money to expand public transport	71	18	11	+60
o More improvements within the public transport system	79	18	3	+76
o Politicians should be more concerned with public transport	70	22	8	+62
o More information should be available about the importance of public transport in the community	74	23	3	+71
o Less money should be spent on public transport and it should be used for road construction	23	31	46	-23
o All public transport lines which do not pay for themselves should be closed down	16	23	61	-45
o A good public transport system is so important to the people of Melbourne that we should accept a budget deficit to achieve this	50	22	28	+22

\* Percentage of "Definitely" minus percentage of "Definitely not"

Table 3: Evaluation of Future Planning Directions

4.3 Community Information Groups

This gives two important ways of determining target groups for future marketing in the area of public awareness. Citizens could be classified according to the way they perceive the role of public transport in the community, and another grouping could be made according to whether they would like further information about the community importance of public transport. The first classification is dealt with in the next section, while this section deals briefly with the community information groups.

As already noted, 74% of all respondents wanted more information about the importance of public transport for the community ("genuine" need) early in the interview. Then, after they were confronted with information in the quizzes, a further 9% wanted this type of information ("stimulated" need). At the end of the interview, only every sixth respondent (17%) had no opinion or believed that this type of information was not important.

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Overall, it can be said that those respondents who consider it important to have information about the community importance of public transport are already better informed about the system -- a certain base level of knowledge about the user options of public transport tends to support the community oriented approach. The breakdown by satisfaction levels exhibits very clear relationships; satisfaction and the desire for (community) information go hand in hand. Here it can also be presumed that there are significant dependencies -- more satisfaction leads to a better level of information, and being better informed leads to a higher level of satisfaction.

### 5. THE LIKELY EFFECTS OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED

#### 5.1 The Reaction to Information About Public Transport

In order to measure the likely effects of information provided, the educative, interactive approach described in Section 3.2.1 was developed. Respondents were asked to estimate firstly the transport budget as a part of the whole state budget, and then within this budget to estimate the share of funds used for metropolitan passenger transport. This was used as the dependent variable in the study. Since these variables were used only to show relativities, they will not be discussed further here. It is, however, interesting that the respondents' estimates of the share of the public transport budget in the total transport budget was significantly higher than the actual share, and that their preferred distribution was even higher than this (Table 4).

TRANSPORT BUDGET	Actual (%)	Perceived (%)	Preferred (%)
Metropolitan Passenger Services	35	44	47
Other (e.g. roads, non-met. p.t., ports, etc.)	65	56	53
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Table 4: Estimated Transport Budget

The information which was presented to the respondents in the remainder of the interview was given in three stages in the form of a quiz. These stages have been described broadly as system, passenger and community information on public transport. In all three cases there were different reactions -- positive (i.e. the respondents had the impression that on the basis of the information presented, their preferred level of funding for public transport was too low), indifferent (no budget change), and negative (transport budget decreased). The results which emerge are almost trivial, but still deserve mention. An information strategy which influences all citizens equally positively does not exist; negative reactions cannot be avoided. Consequently, the success of a given measure relies on positive reactions outweighing negative ones -- as strongly as possible. This occurred in all three cases (Table 5).

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	TOTAL (%)	Rate	Index (Actual=100)
Preferred vs. Actual - Before Information			
o Higher	41		
o Same	36		
o Lower	23		
TOTAL	100	+18*	107.5**
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Preferred - After System Information			
o Higher	17		
o Same	77		
o Lower	6		
TOTAL	100	+11	111.8
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Preferred - After Passenger Information			
o Higher	24		
o Same	69		
o Lower	7		
TOTAL	100	+17	115.2
-----			
Preferred - After Community Information			
o Higher	13		
o Same	85		
o Lower	2		
TOTAL	100	+11	117.5
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TOTAL RATE		+57	117.5

\* % of people whose preferred transport budget increased, minus the % of people whose preferred budget decreased.

\*\* Average share of budget preferred for metropolitan passenger services relative to the perceived actual share (i.e. 44% = 100)

Table 5: Respondents' Perceived-Actual, and Preferred Transport Budgets

Overall, respondents wanted an increase in the share of the metropolitan passenger service budget of 17.5% (i.e. an increase from 44% to 52%). On average, every second respondent voted for at least one budget increase during the course of the interview.

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### 5.2 Effective Information

After each increase in the level of information given to respondents, an exploration of reasons for change (or no change) was carried out. This was particularly useful for the determination of facts which are effective in achieving the desired level of improvement of community awareness. In many cases, it was shown that several pieces of information together lead to the allocation of an increased budget (which was used here as the measure of the effectiveness of the information) (Table 6).

SYSTEM INFORMATION	Positive Reaction (17%)
o No. of daily users	9
o No. of MTA employees	3
o Route kilometers of system	2
o All of them	9
	<u>23</u>
PASSENGER INFORMATION	Positive Reaction (24%)
o Usage by disabled	8
o Safety vis-a-vis cars	5
o Mode split	2
o Use of road space	2
o Use by disadvantaged	1
o All of them	7
	<u>25</u>
COMMUNITY INFORMATION	Positive Reaction (13%)
o Less pollution with p.t.	3
o MTA a major employer	2
o Energy savings with p.t.	1
o All of them	7
	<u>13</u>

Table 6: Effectiveness of Information

A general finding was that information about the size of the public transport system and the range of users was very effective as long as it is presented in absolute figures. Relative sizes (in this case usually percentages) should usually be avoided. One of the reasons is that respondents

overestimate the share of public transport trips as a percentage of all trips by about 75%, and when they are presented with the actual percentage, they tend to be disappointed. Another reason is that many relative figures show public transport's chief competitor -- the car -- in a "favourable" light.

There is another limitation which applies to all information which highlights the "social function" of public transport. This type of information is certainly surprising and impressive, but it necessary to avoid giving the impression that public transport is for the old, the poor, the handicapped, and the ethnics. This image, known in Germany as the 4-A problem, actually serves to reduce the patronage increase, and needs to be minimised.

Finally, for the environmental aspects -- one of the great strengths of public transport -- it was shown that the awareness of Melbourne citizens is substantially less than that of persons living in metropolitan areas in Europe. At this point it is difficult to say whether this situation will continue, although there are some indications that this (more critical) environmental awareness will increase in Australia in the coming years. This should be reason enough to at least be prepared for this development.

The measurement of community awareness made in the three "information quizzes" confirmed the (positive) effect of the information strategy -- for every eighth person the importance of public transport was ranked higher at this point (Table 7).

	TOTAL (%)
Higher	13
Same	78
Lower	9
	<hr/> 100

Table 7: Changed Importance of Public Transport After Information was Presented

The future planning directions, which were already ranked very highly at the beginning of the interview, were also ranked higher after the information had been presented (Table 8). This shows that the two most important changes were a desire for more community information on the role of public transport, together with a strong readiness to accept a deficit. Perhaps even more important, however, is that respondents' perceptions were sharpened to the extent that they said that less money should be spent on road construction and that it should be spent on public transport.

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	Improvement Level
o More money to expand public transport	+8
o More improvements within the public transport system	+6
o Politicians should be more concerned with public transport	+6
o More information should be available about the importance of public transport in the community	+9
o Less money should be spent on public transport and it should be used for road construction	-18
o All public transport lines which do not pay for themselves should be closed down	-9
o A good public transport system is so important to the people of Melbourne that we should accept a budget deficit to achieve this	+9

**Table 8:** Changed Importance of Future Planning Directions after Information was Presented

### 5.3 Community Importance Groups

One important target group emerges from the previous sections for any project aimed to address the issue of public awareness of public transport in Melbourne -- citizens who, after the presentation of new information, improve their perception of public transport.

This group has (almost) the same knowledge of the physical system as overall, but significant difficulties with the use of the system. The feelings about public transport are less positive, but they are not 'car-fanatics'. They are interested in public transport improvements yet they noticed far too few actual improvements. They are less frequently commuters and are rarely dissatisfied with the system. In almost every second case when measured at the beginning of the interview, they thought the community importance of public transport was very low or not important at all. The information presented was more effective than average (budget increase 28.3% compared with the average of 17.5%), passenger information being the most significant in bringing about this change.

In this group women are strongly represented (60% versus 52%) as are persons who are older (share of persons 50 years and over is 20% versus 16%). They own less cars (no car or only 1 car in the household; 52% versus 39%) and

have fewer licences (49% with licences versus 67%). They are less often employed (40% versus 56%), and therefore more often pensioners (10% versus 5%) or students (37% versus 25%). In other words, this group is, according to its sociodemographic structure, almost an exact picture of the classical target group for the services of an effective public transport system!

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The paper has described the background and research involved in a project to evaluate the public awareness of public transport in Melbourne. It has outlined the logical approach to the problem of dealing with all persons in the household and of the interactions between those persons. In addition, it has shown the very positive effect of introducing information about the importance of public transport to the community, and the parallel increase in positive perceptions towards public transport.

The approach has, in fact, since been used to implement some of the measures to increase public awareness which resulted from the study. But, the effect of the study, and the potential benefit of the approach, may well be summed up by one of the people in the target group described in Section 5.3.

I had no idea public transport was so important. I knew all about the energy crisis and pollution from school, but I guess I just hadn't related it to public transport versus cars. Before you asked all these questions I had only thought about how public transport affected me and how lousy it was -- now I see it's much deeper.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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