



The Bellcord

Journal of the Melbourne Tram Museum

Number 50 – June 2021

Front cover

W2 class 535 rounds the curve into Pilkington Street from Holden Street, North Fitzroy on a tram enthusiast charter trip (20 July 1969). The incorrect destination and route number were a request of participants.

Note the distinctive track curve to negotiate the narrow street. Between 1926 and 1939, a second track lay between this and the brick wall of the tramway substation. The disused overhead trolley wire can still be seen.

Note also the sign on the pole at the right of the photograph which reads 'Warning: Beware of buses crossing'. This dates from 1939.

Photo: Dale Budd

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Editing & layout: Geoff Brown

Museum News

After being closed for just over a year, we were delighted to welcome visitors back to the museum in late March.

Our operations have been adapted in line with State Government COVIDSafe settings, and include registration upon entry and limits on the number of people within individual trams and exhibition spaces.

Unfortunately due to restrictions on indoor gatherings, our open day on 12 June has been cancelled and the museum will remain closed until further notice.

Once those restrictions have been relaxed, we hope to return to our normal schedule, namely the second and fourth Saturdays of each month, from 11am until 4pm.

Updates will be posted on our website and social media, and museum members will be notified by email when we plan to re-open.

We hope to see you back at the Melbourne Tram Museum very soon.

Museum shop

You can browse our online catalogue under the [Shop tab](#) on the museum website, or visit us on a future open day. Your purchase will assist us in operating the museum.

Membership renewal

Membership renewal forms will be mailed to current members in early July. Early payment would be appreciated.

Members are part of our museum community, with free access to the museum, regular email news and the opportunity to participate in volunteer events and activities. Members also receive access to the exclusive members' zone of our website and 10% discount off the purchase of new books from our shop (excluding postage and packaging)

Details are provided under the [Members tab](#) on the museum website.

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Holden Street's Lost Tramway



ABOVE: W7 class 1006 westbound in Brunswick Road on a tram enthusiast charter trip (December 1971).

Note that the single track is on one side of the double white lines marking the centre of the roadway, and that the tram is travelling toward oncoming motor vehicle traffic.

Photo: Randall Wilson

Holden Street

In 1881, the section of Brunswick Road within the City of Fitzroy was renamed Holden Street after James Holden, the mayor of Fitzroy in 1880-81.

Until 1976 a seldom-used single tram track ran along parts of Holden Street, North Fitzroy and Brunswick Road, Brunswick.

It did not appear on most transport maps and there were no tram stops where passengers could board. More puzzling than this, the line ran along one side of the roadway which meant that trams in one direction travelled toward the oncoming motor vehicle traffic.

With little advance notice, this line was removed between 1976 and 1980.

Stand-alone tramway

The story of the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line begins in the first years of Melbourne's electric trams with the formation of the Fitzroy, Northcote and Preston Tramways Trust (FNPTT) in August 1915.

Councillors and residents of Fitzroy, Northcote and Preston proposed an electric tramway that would link their three municipalities. The two routes would connect passengers from East and West Preston with the cable trams in Northcote and North Fitzroy. But no direct access to the city would be possible as the cable tram network monopolised most of the thoroughfares.

Two Part Series

This article is the second in a two part series. The first, *Holden Street's Forgotten Tram Works*, appeared in the [March 2021](#) edition of 'The Bellcord', which is available on the museum website.



ABOVE: The junction of Plenty Road, High Street and Miller Street, Preston looking northward. The terminus of the Northcote cable tram is behind the photographer (1921).

S class 139 (renumbered 169 in 1923) inbound from East Preston, pauses at Miller Street. It will shortly turn right to cross the tramway bridge over the Whittlesea railway line and travel via St Georges Road to North Fitzroy.

Photo: Darebin Library collection

The history of the FNPTT is recorded in Russell Jones's article, *[Never A Paying Passenger](#)*, on the museum website.

One detail is worth highlighting. The Trust's financial viability was at best marginal. Low population densities and construction challenges were major factors, particularly the need for a new bridge across the Merri Creek into North Fitzroy.

Barkly Street proposal

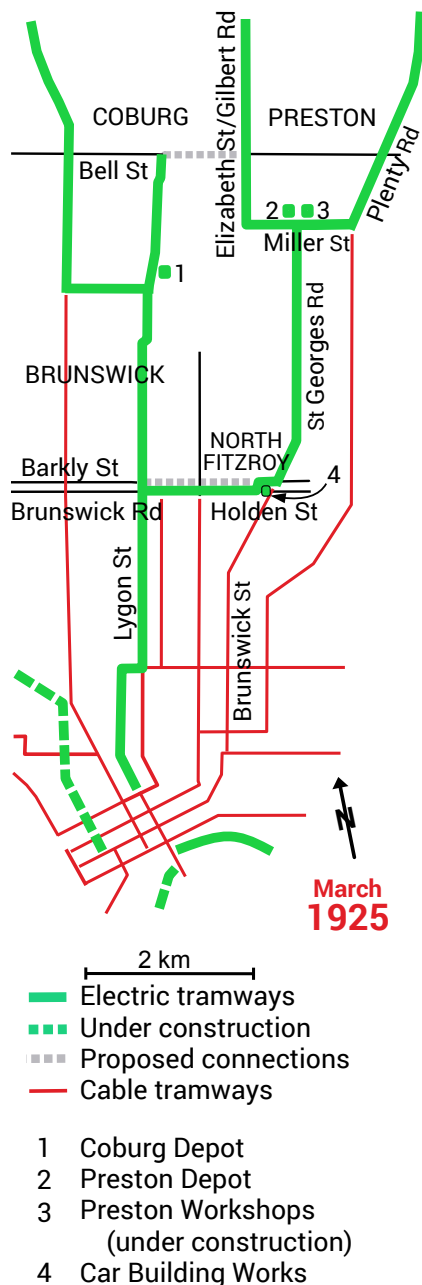
These viability concerns led to an approach by the neighbouring Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg Tramways Trust (MBCTT) just a month after the FNPTT's formation. It suggested that the two adjacent systems be built and operated under one central management.

The schedule of potential cost savings was prepared by Mr Struan Robertson, the Engineer and Manager of MBCTT. He proposed that the depot at East Coburg be extended rather than building a new depot in Preston.

Robertson also proposed that a connecting track be built between the two systems using Barkly Street, which runs parallel to Holden Street and Brunswick Road. Discussions continued into 1916 when the proposal was shelved.

Construction of the stand-alone FNPTT lines began in 1918, but history overtook the Trust before it commenced operations.

The newly established Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) assumed control in February 1920 and became the operator of this isolated tramway.



ABOVE: Tram lines in March 1925, when the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line first opened.

Stage 1: Building the missing link (1920-1930)

By 1920, there were eight separate electric tramways in Melbourne either in operation or in the planning stages. They were all localised systems, mostly situated around the periphery of the cable tram network, and most were operated by or on behalf of local municipalities. Two tramways were operated by the Victorian Railways.

The task of linking six of these eight tramways and replacing the cable tram network was handed to the M&MTB, inaugurated in November 1919. A timeline of the first track connections between these separate tramways appears on page 6. The two Victorian Railways' lines were not included.

In February 1920, the Board took over five tramway trusts, initially consolidating them according to their geographic location – three into the Northern System and two into the Eastern System.

For nearly three years, these systems ran separate operations, including separate vehicle numbering sequences which overlapped. In August 1922, the North Melbourne Electric Tramways and Lighting Company (NMETL) lines were added to the Northern System. Then in 1923, the two systems were amalgamated.

Track connection

The Board first proposed to link the former FNPTT and MBCTT lines by constructing a track along Bell Street. In October 1921 the Governor in Council approved the proposal:

[Approval to construct] a single electric tramway track in Bell Street, town of Coburg and shire of Preston, with curves connecting the Board's electric tramways in Nicholson Street, town of Coburg, and Elizabeth Street (*renamed Gilbert Road*) shire of Preston, so as to permit the through running of cars between these systems ... (*Victorian Gazette, 19 October 1921*)

However, by April 1922 the Board had revised its plans:

Further consideration has been given to the proposal, and it has now been decided, subject to the approval of the Minister of Public Works, to construct a line about a mile in length, along Brunswick Road, Brunswick and Holden, Pilkington and Barkly Streets, North Fitzroy, ...

The tramway will serve residents of thickly populated districts, and will allow passengers on the Preston tramway to be conveyed direct to the city ...

As there are about 10,000 people resident in the Shire of Preston, the construction of the connecting tramway will prove very useful to those who reside close to the line of route, and considerable distances from the railway ... It may be stated that more than 30,000 people will be concerned in the improved means of communication from suburb to suburb. (*The Herald, 27 April 1922*)

M&MTB track connection timeline

July 1923: Church Street, Hawthorn connected the former Prahran & Malvern Trust and Hawthorn Trust lines.

March 1925: Holden Street and Brunswick Road connected the former FNPTT and MBCTT lines.

January 1926: Swanston Street connected all the above mentioned lines and the newly completed St Kilda Beach via South Melbourne line.

February 1927: A temporary track in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne connected the former NMETL and West Coburg lines to all the above mentioned lines.

May 1954: River Street, Rosamond Road and Williamson Road, Maidstone connected the former Footscray Trust lines and the Gordon Street extension to all the above mentioned lines.

The M&MTB plan for this Holden Street/Brunswick Road line was approved in September 1922. At a projected cost of £19,500, it did not require authorisation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways which oversaw tramway extensions with costs in excess of £20,000.

While this route would be more expensive than the Bell Street proposal, it had the advantages of avoiding the steep gradient in Bell Street and providing direct city access for more Preston line passengers. It would also provide rolling stock access to the Holden Street car building works and the soon to be proposed Preston Workshops opposite the Preston Depot.

However, one requirement of the route would be a diversion around the cable car shed and terminus and the car building works at the corner of Holden Street and St Georges Road.

Construction

In September 1923, a short section of track was laid at the corner of Barkly Street and St Georges Road to access the car building works. This coincided with the completion of the first W class tram at the works, ready for its road testing along St Georges Road.

Construction of the full tramway was not completed until March 1925. Initially the line was double track along Brunswick Road from Lygon Street to Nicholson Street and single track along Holden Street and Pilkington Street, joining the existing double track in Barkly Street.

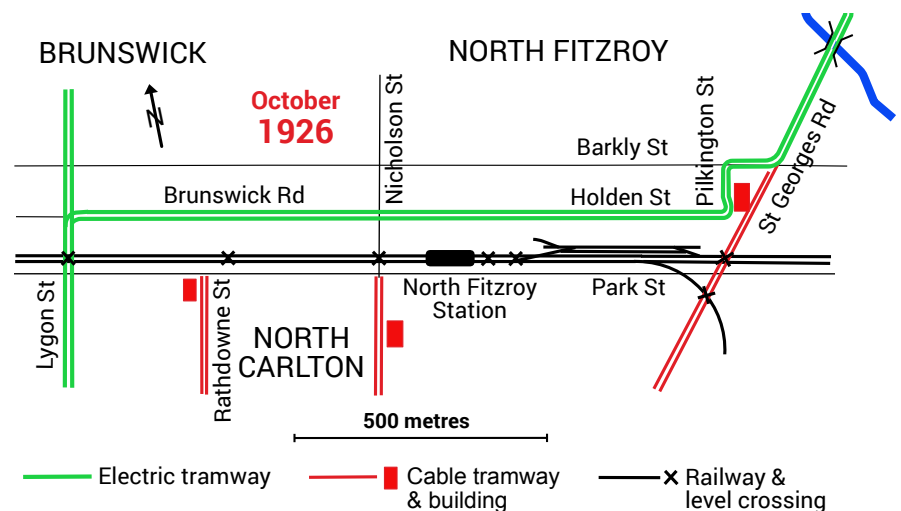
Full duplication was completed in two stages: Nicholson Street to Pilkington Street by 17 July 1925, and Pilkington Street to Barkly Street by 18 October 1926.

Duplication of the Pilkington Street to Barkly Street section occurred after the closure of the car building works. The delay of this final stage suggests that the location of the works was a barrier. Pilkington Street was narrower than it is today and tramway land was given over to widen the street.

RIGHT: Tram and rail lines in North Fitzroy and Brunswick in October 1926, when the duplication of the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line was completed.

For the previous 19 months of operations, Pilkington Street and sections of Holden Street were single track.

Source: M&MTB and VR maps





ABOVE: Swanston Street looking southward soon after its conversion from cable to electric trams (early 1926).

S class 164 from West Preston (via Holden Street) is southbound and may soon turn back at a crossover south of the river. An M&MTB bus is southbound to Elsterwick Station.

Newly commissioned *W* class 372 is northbound for Coburg Cemetery (later East Coburg).

Photo: State Library Victoria

Route numbers via Holden St & Swanston St 1928-30

Route 9: East Preston – City

Route 9A: Thornbury – City

Route 10: West Preston – City

Route 11: East Preston – St Kilda Beach via South Melbourne

Route 12: West Preston – St Kilda Beach via South Melbourne

Operations

When the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line first opened in March 1925, East and West Preston trams were extended along Lygon Street and Swanston Street to Lonsdale Street. The new line also provided a connection to Coburg Depot for rolling stock transfers.

In early 1926, when the Board had completed its major conversion works on Swanston Street and St Kilda Road, many East and West Preston services were extended to St Kilda Beach via South Melbourne. Coburg trams were extended to St Kilda Beach via St Kilda Road and East Coburg trams to Elsterwick.

Passenger numbers on St Georges Road were less than expected. So in April 1927 Board Chairman Alex Cameron announced a service adjustment between 9am and noon. The less patronised West Preston trams would terminate at Miller Street, with passengers transferring to the East Preston trams for no extra fare. Understandably this brought some complaints.

From late 1928, the Board introduced a city-wide route number system and installed route number boxes on the bogie (larger) cars – but not on the single truck (smaller) cars.

The routes that traversed Holden Street/Brunswick Road at that time were allocated the numbers shown in the adjacent box, but they were only displayed on the larger cars. Preston Depot used mostly *S* class and *W* class trams at that time.

RIGHT: Q class 143 in Brunswick Road at Nicholson Street operating the tram shuttle from Lygon Street to St Georges Road (c1939). The dual track can still be seen.

The incorrect destination reads 'Lygon Street'. Displaying an incorrect destination appears to have been a common occurrence on this shuttle service.

Photo: Nowell brothers



Route numbers via Brunswick St & Collins St 1930-37

Route 9: East Preston – City

Route 9A: Thornbury – City

Route 9B: North Fitzroy – City

Route 10: West Preston – City

Route 11: Lygon Street – St Georges Road (via Holden Street)

Route 12: NOT USED

Stage 2: Bypassed and downgraded (1930-1950)

The regular to and fro of tram traffic along the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line slowed markedly from 26 October 1930. The completion of the electric tramway conversion works in Brunswick Street and Collins Street opened a more direct route for Preston services and workshop transfers – and the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line was bypassed.

The resulting route change meant that Preston trams could no longer reach the southern suburbs. The St Kilda Beach via South Melbourne route was reallocated to East Coburg trams.

In place of the direct Preston to city trams, a short distance tram shuttle was introduced between St Georges Road and Lygon Street, operated by driver-only cars from Preston Depot. The shuttle was allocated route number 11, but this could not be displayed on the single truck cars operating the service.

The shuttle timetable advertised only the first and last cars and appears to have remained roughly the same for 20 years – even when replaced by buses or downgraded to operating on a single track. (see adjacent box)

Shuttle timetable Sept 1937

Monday–Friday

Lygon St dep: 6.38am to 11.57pm

St G Rd dep: 6.30am to 11.45pm

Saturday

Lygon St dep: 6.38am to 12.08am

St G Rd dep: 6.30am to 12.00am

Sunday

Lygon St dep: 1.38pm to 10.57pm

St G Rd dep: 1.31pm to 10.45pm

Sunday morning trams were introduced on most lines in 1936, but not on this shuttle service.

Source: Graeme Cleak collection

Bow Collector Trials

The Holden Street/Brunswick Road shuttle was used during the 1930s to conduct a detailed trial of bow collectors. Bow collectors were an alternative method of power collection used by a number of other tramways including the Hobart Municipal Tramways.

Melbourne's electric trams had always used trolley poles with a grooved trolley wheel to collect electrical current from the overhead wire. But the wheels caused excessive noise and the arcing current caused damage to the expensive copper wire.

In 1924 the Board had trialled Siemens bow collectors on the single truck X class cars 217 and 218 that operated the shuttle service between Hawthorn Depot and Hawthorn Bridge. Also in 1928, a bow collector had been briefly trialled on a single truck B class car.



ABOVE: U class 205, fitted with a bow collector, waiting at the shuttle's Lygon Street terminus before departing for St Georges Road (1938). The destination blind has not yet been correctly set.

The shuttle tram used a crossover to the left of the photograph to move to the eastbound track. This crossover was installed on 6 September 1930 to facilitate shuttle operations.

The bow collector was replaced by a conventional trolley pole in the following months.

Photo: Ray Pearson

In 1931, the Board fitted Fischer bow collectors to U class cars 205, 209 and 211, which operated the Holden Street/Brunswick Road shuttle.

Three years into the trial, the M&MTB's chief engineer, T P Strickland, prepared a paper outlining the results. It compared the costs of the bow collectors used on the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line with the costs of trolley wheels and trolley shoes used on the isolated Footscray lines.

His paper was submitted to the 1934 Australian and New Zealand Tramway Conference held in Sydney. It concluded that the cost of bow collectors per thousand miles was twice that of trolley wheels on the main Melbourne lines and three times the costs of the trolley wheels and shoes on the Footscray lines.

The increased cost of the bow collectors was due to:

- the need for daily lubrication of the collector plates that ran along the underside of the trolley wire.
- the excessive wear at the centre of these plates where they contacted the overhead. The wire along Holden Street/Brunswick Road had not been repositioned to follow a staggered path and spread the wear across the collector plates, as is the practice with pantographs today.
- trams with trolley wheels continued to use the line, which resulted in a rough surface to the underside of the trolley wire due to arcing. This acted like a rasp on the collector plates.

The bow collectors were replaced with trolley poles during 1937 and 1938.

Details of the history of tramway power collection can be found in Russell Jones's article, *Power collection for Melbourne tramcars*, on the museum website. A comparative table from Strickland's paper is included.

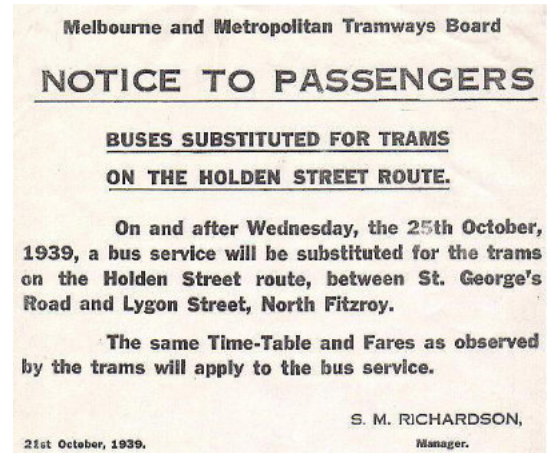


ABOVE: M&MTB Leyland Cub bus No 39 at Port Melbourne Depot, built by Ruskin Body Builders in 1935. This model of bus also operated the Holden Street shuttle.

Photo: Bus & Coach Society of Victoria collection

ABOVE RIGHT: Notice to passengers regarding the introduction of buses (1939).

Image: Len Millar collection



Bus substitution

The appointment of Hector H Bell as Board chairman at the end of 1935 heralded the introduction of buses to replace several cable tram routes. The Holden Street shuttle also joined this list in 1939.

Just days after Australia entered the war with Germany, Chairman Bell reported to the Board that ...

the Holden Street Tramway tracks were due for reconstruction, and recommended that one track be removed and the rails recovered therefrom used for the duplication of the Maribyrnong River line. Also for a motorbus service to be substituted for the electric tramway service. (Board minutes, 7 September 1939)

Seven weeks later on 26 October, the Board minutes recorded:

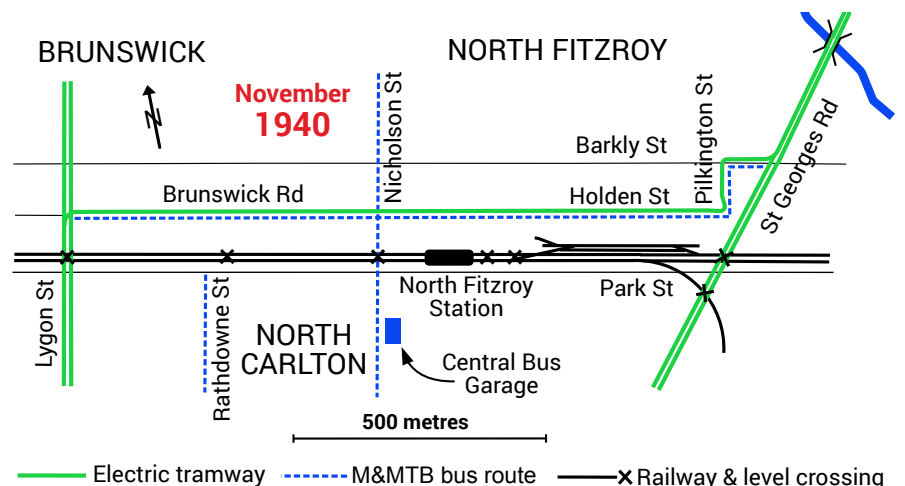
Secretary submitted extract from the Government Gazette of 25th instant authorising the Board to operate a motor bus service from the corner of St Georges Road and Barkly Street, Fitzroy via Barkly Street, Pilkington Street, Holden Street and Brunswick Road to the corner of Brunswick Road and Lygon Street, in substitution of the electric tramway service.

Manager ... reporting that the changeover to motor bus operation on the Holden Street route took place yesterday and that the work of removing the south track has been commenced. (Board minutes, 26 October 1939)

RIGHT: Tram lines, rail lines and M&MTB bus routes in November 1940, after the excavation of the southern track in Holden Street/ Brunswick Road and the introduction of buses to Nicholson Street.

The bus that replaced the tram shuttle for 20 months followed the tram route. A single track was retained for rolling stock transfers.

Source: M&MTB and VR maps



RIGHT: S class 159 in Barkly Street at the shuttle's St Georges Road terminus, waiting to depart for Lygon Street (1944).

The car displays white painted surfaces above and below the driver's windows and at the edges of the bumper bar to increase its visibility during wartime lighting restrictions.

Photo: Wal Jack



The shuttle bus service followed the same timetable and route as the tram. It was operated by small driver-only Leyland Cub buses from the nearby Central Bus Garage.

Maribyrnong Road extension

The Maribyrnong Road tram line was extended to the Explosives and Ordnance Factories during 1940-42.

Details of these extensions were included in the June 2019 edition of 'The Bellcord', available on the museum website.

By early April 1940, the rails that had formed the southern and eastern track had been removed and were used to duplicate the single sections of the line in Maribyrnong Road east of the river.

The obsolete overhead trolley wire was left in place until 1976 and the northern/western track retained for tramcar transfers.

Trams reinstated

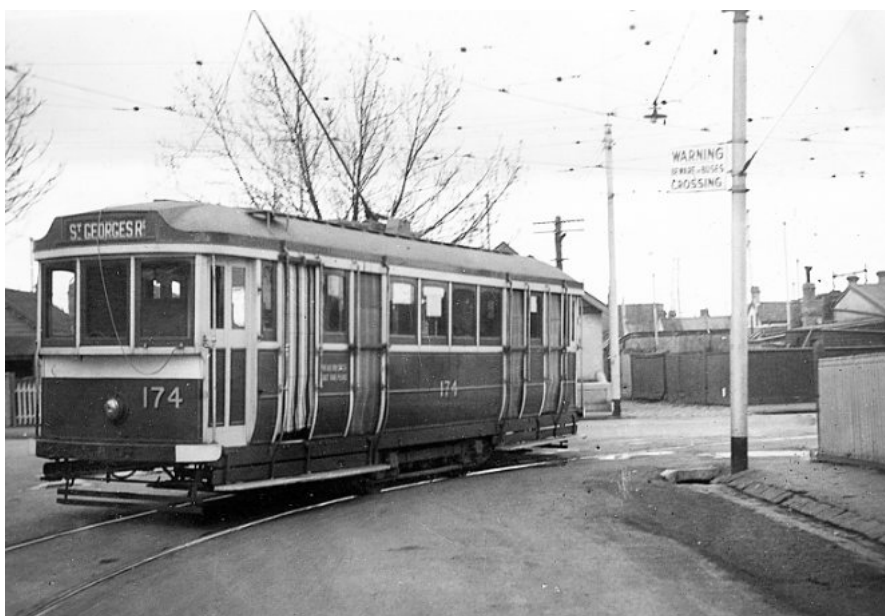
As the war effort increased, buses were used to transport essential workers to defence factories. Fuel rationing also became a necessity.

In July 1941 the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board approached the M&MTB to investigate ways of reducing petrol consumption.

RIGHT: R class 174 rounds the curve from Pilkington Street into Holden Street operating the tram shuttle to Lygon Street on the single track (1943).

The sign attached to the pole on the corner reads 'Warning: Beware of buses crossing'. This was erected in 1939 and remained until the line was removed in 1976.

Photo: Wal Jack





ABOVE: Looking eastward from Nicholson Street along Holden Street, North Fitzroy towards St Georges Road (c1949).

R class 174 heads towards St Georges Road operating the tram shuttle along the single track. M&MTB Leyland OPS1 half cab bus 405 operates the Bourke Street to East Brunswick service along Nicholson Street.

Note the Marshalite 'clock-face' traffic signals designed and built in Melbourne from the 1930s and used at many intersections until the late 1960s.

Photo: Lyle Fowler, State Library Victoria collection

The Board applied to the Public Works Department for approval to replace the Holden Street shuttle bus with a tram shuttle. This was noted in the Board minutes of 7 August 1941 and driver-only trams returned to Holden Street that day.

Anecdotal observations are that the shuttle timetable only required the use of one tram which avoided conflicting movements on the single track. Rolling stock transfers would have been instructed to not impede the service car.

In the following decades of the 1960s and 1970s, one former driver recalls access to the single line being controlled by Radio Centre at tramways head office. Drivers would phone to request access, using tramway 'track phones' strategically positioned beside the track around the network.

Stage 3: Tram services withdrawn (1950-1970)

In October 1949 Robert Risson replaced Hector Bell as Board chairman. Ongoing disputes with the tramway employees' union over driver-only trams and buses and other issues resulted in industrial action and a 60 day system-wide shutdown between February and April 1950.

When tram and bus services resumed, no clear resolution had been reached and many staff had left for other employment. These staff shortages meant that some services could not be reinstated for a few months, including the all-night driver-only trams.

RIGHT: W2 class 241 westbound on the single track in Holden Street, travelling toward oncoming eastbound motor traffic (c1970).

The incorrect destination and route number allocated to Latrobe Street/ Brunswick Street services suggest the car was being transferred to another depot.

Photo: TMSV collection



On 3 September 1950 the tram shuttle was again replaced by a bus – this time permanently. But the single track was retained for a further 25 years, used occasionally for tram transfers and football specials.

Tram enthusiasts

The Holden Street line also became a favoured route for tram enthusiasts who chartered trams to tour the network. Such charters were the only way they could ride along this novel stretch of track. These trips provided many opportunities for photos, some of which feature in this article.

The alignment of the single track along the northern side of the roadway caused westbound trams to travel into the path of oncoming eastbound motor traffic. This posed an increased risk of collisions as more motor vehicles used the road.

In April 1956, two changes were made. With the construction of the new tramway along Bourke Street to East Brunswick, a connecting curve was added from Nicholson Street into Holden Street.

In addition, the North Carlton bus route in Rathdowne Street was extended along Brunswick Road and Holden Street, then through Clifton Hill and Fairfield to West Heidelberg. This replaced the bus shuttle.

RIGHT: X2 class 676 and L class 104 in Pilkington Street round the curve into Holden Street on a tram enthusiast charter trip (March 1974).

*Photo: Weston Langford
[Altered white balance,
minor cropping]*



RIGHT: PCC class 1041 rounds the curve into Pilkington Street from Holden Street as part of its testing across the tram network (c1973).

Photo: Graeme Farrar



Stage 4: Abandoned and removed (1971-1980)

To formally abandon a tramway, the M&MTB Act 1918 (Section 59) required that its operation cause financial loss, that the Board put its case in writing to the relevant Minister and that the Parliament be given time to challenge the proposal.

During 1971, this process was undertaken for the Holden Street/Brunswick Road line. Board minutes record the procedure and clarify a commonly held misconception that the track was excavated without the Board's approval.

Civil Engineer ... requesting Board direction as to the future of the existing single track tramway when Holden Street, Fitzroy is reconstructed from Nicholson Street to St Georges Road. He suggests two alternatives: Abandon the single track if there is to be no alteration at North Fitzroy Depot, [or] Duplicate the track between Nicholson Street and St Georges Road, and abandon the track between Nicholson Street and Lygon Street, if operations at North Fitzroy are to be transferred to East Preston Depot. Deferred (*Board minutes, 4 February 1971*)

RIGHT: W5 class 800 in Holden Street being transferred to Preston Workshops for repairs, following collision damage to its dash panel (15 January 1976). This may have been the last tram to traverse the Holden Street line.

Photo: Andrew Cook



RIGHT: Newly commissioned Z class 25 southbound in Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy crossing the Holden Street intersection (early 1976).

The Holden Street track had recently been excavated and the tramway crossing would soon to be removed. The track in Brunswick Road on the other side of the tram remained until 1979-80.

Photo: Greg King



Traffic Manager ... reporting that he favours the abandonment of the single track, provided an additional inner curve, leading from the Elizabeth Street 'down' track to the Latrobe Street 'up' track is installed. Deferred one week. (*Board minutes, 18 February 1971*)

Traffic Manager ... now favours complete abandonment of the Holden Street track. Resolved, subject to Government approval. (*Board minutes, 1 April 1971*)

Civil Engineer ... submitting draft notice and statement of the proposal to abandon the tramway in Brunswick Road, Holden Street, Pilkington Street and Barkly Street in the Cities of Brunswick and Fitzroy together with Plan No 14360 - for approval by the Board. Approved, subject to amendment by Chairman of covering letter to Minister of Transport. (*Board minutes, 20 May 1971*)

Chief Administrative Officer, Ministry of Transport advising that ... as no resolution of Parliament has been made in respect of this proposal, the Board may now abandon that part of the tramway to which the notice relates. Noted. (*Board minutes, 9 December 1971*)

RIGHT: Looking eastward along Holden Street, North Fitzroy towards St Georges Road during major road reconstruction works (early 1976).

These works removed the remaining single tram track in Holden Street, Pilkington Street and Barkly Street. A short length of track was left in Barkly Street connected to the St Georges Road line.

The span wires and dual trolley wires are still in place.

Photo: Richard Youl



RIGHT: W5 class 821 turns onto the remaining short track length in Barkly Street (June 1993). This track was removed in the mid 1990s.

Photo: F Londey, Melbourne Tram Museum collection



This matter is not mentioned again in the Board minutes. M&MTB engineers worked with the Cities of Brunswick and Fitzroy to arrange the necessary budgets to pay for the Board's share and for the Councils to rebuild their roads. As a result the line continued to carry tramway traffic for a further four years.

In early 1976 with little advance notice, City of Fitzroy contractors began track excavations in Barkly Street, Pilkington Street and Holden Street as far as the Nicholson Street intersection. A short section of connected track was left in Barkly Street at the request of the Board and removed sometime in the mid 1990s.

A long time Preston Workshops employee recalls seeing the contractor's truck arrive loaded with the excavated rails seeking advice as to where they should be placed.

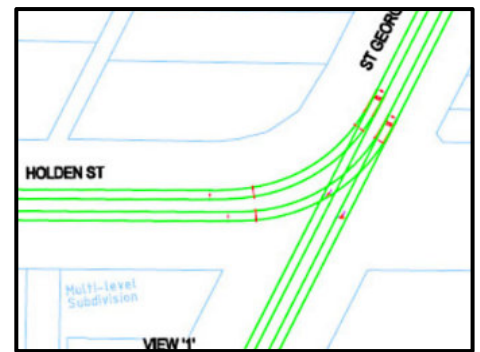
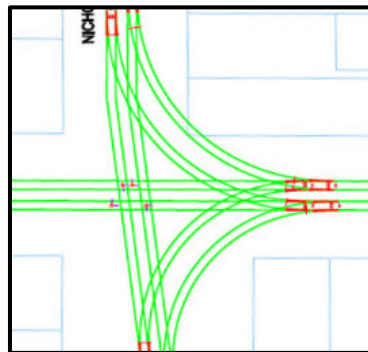
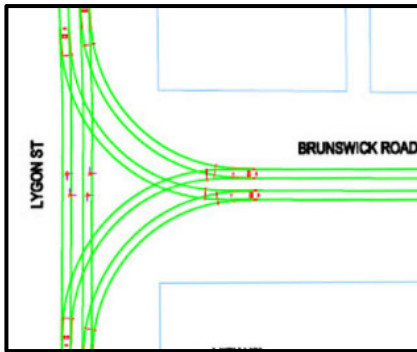
While the track crossing at Nicholson Street was removed soon after, the Brunswick Road section of line in the City of Brunswick was not excavated until April 1979 and September 1980.

BELOW: The remaining 20 metres of track at the corner of Lygon Street and Brunswick Road photographed from both ends (2021).

Photos: Geoff Brown

When this was removed, a short length of connected track was retained in Brunswick Road at Lygon Street. Today this track remains but the connection was removed in November 2007 during Lygon Street track renewal works.





ABOVE: Three segments of the concept track maps for Holden Street and Brunswick Road, included in the 2007 Expression of Interest document.

Images: Tram Depot and Track Link Development EOI

New proposal (2007)

An option of reinstating a track link along Holden Street and Brunswick Road was included in a 2007 expression of interest (EOI) document from the Victorian Department of Infrastructure.

It sought preliminary work for the upgrade of Glenhuntly Depot and Preston Workshops, together with the construction of a new track link to the latter. The link would allow trams stalled at the new Preston Depot to serve routes 1 and 96 with a minimum of dead running.

Other options included in the EOI were Blyth Street/Arthurton Road and Park Street. The document included concept track drawings for each option.

While the upgrade to Preston Workshops was completed in 2016, the Glenhuntly Depot upgrade and the track link were not undertaken.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Graeme Cleak and Geoff Warburton for their assistance.

Geoff Brown, Brian Weedon and Warren Doubleday

References

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- Melbourne Electric Tramway Gunzel Notes (2020), Don Storey*
- MMBW maps (various), State Library Victoria*
- M&MTB Board Minutes (various), Public Records Office Victoria*
- M&MTB track maps (various)*
- Newspapers (as noted), National Library Australia*
- Tram Depot & Track Link Development, Expression of Interest No.13951, Victorian Government Department of Infrastructure (10 Sept 2007)*
- Trams Down Under website*
- Victorian Railways signal diagrams: Macaulay to North Fitzroy; North Fitzroy to Merri (1932)*
- Weston Langford Railway Photography website (2021)*

Warrandyte via Doncaster: Tramways Bus Expansion



ABOVE: M&MTB AEC Regal Mark VI bus 799 at the Russell Street terminus outside the Forum Theatre (c1980).

Photo: Bus & Coach Society of Victoria collection

On 2 July 1961, the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) became the major bus operator in the Doncaster area.

A year earlier the Board had approached the Minister of Transport to extend its city to North Kew bus route to Bulleen. The Transport Regulation Board responded that approval would be conditional on the payment of adequate compensation to the existing operator, Withers Transport. Discussions with the company continued for several months.

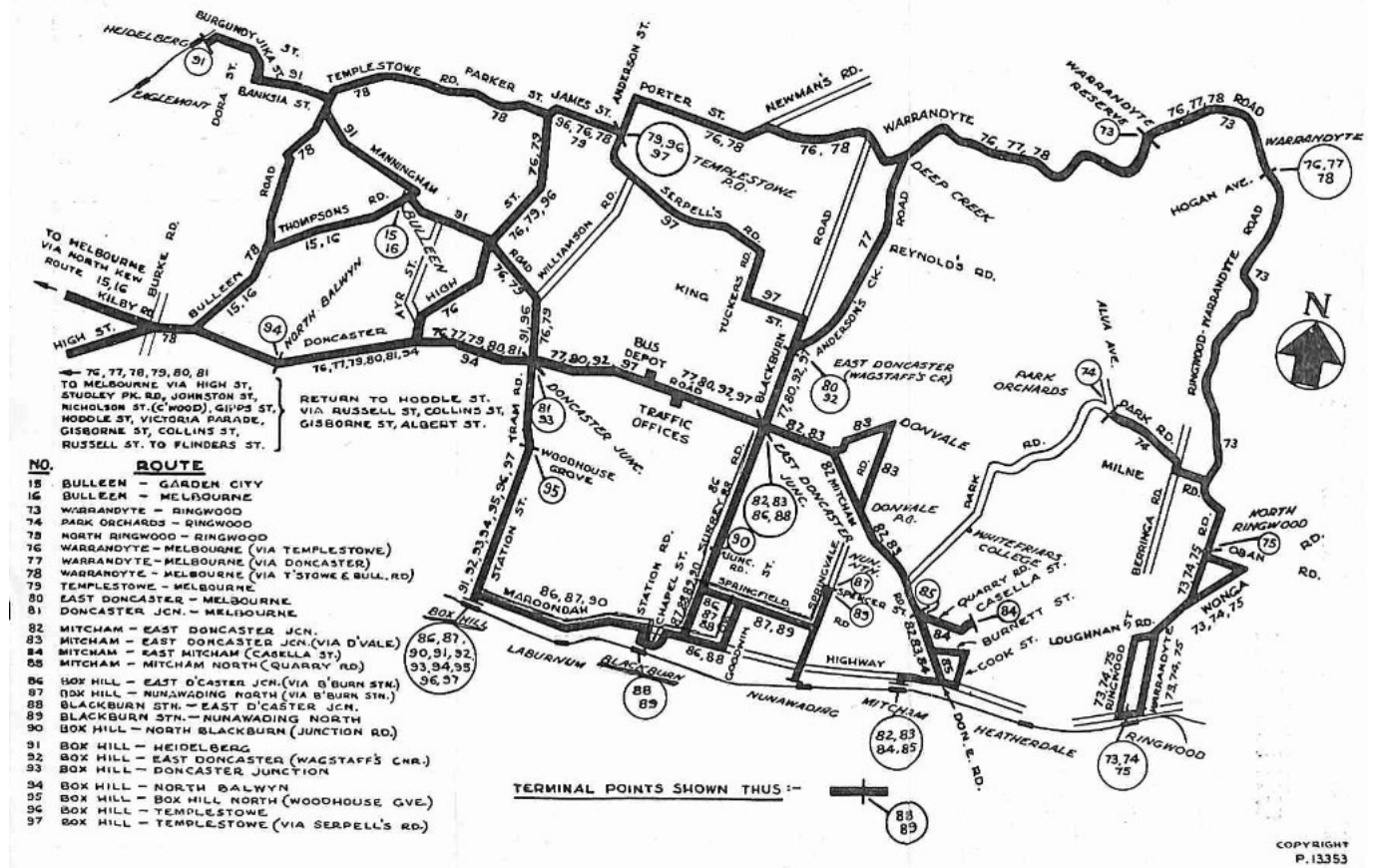
In February 1961 Mr A P Withers offered to sell the company assets to the Board for £80,000, which the Board accepted at its meeting on 8 March. The sale was formalised and M&MTB operations commenced in July 1961.

RIGHT: Two of the M&MTB acquired Withers Transport buses at the former Withers' depot – Austin 625 built by Symons & Fowler and Reo 639 built by MBA. Both display M&MTB numbers and insignia (c1963).

Twenty buses were acquired; only 13 were used by the Board.

Photo: Geoff Mann collection, Bus and Coach Society of Victoria





ABOVE: Route map included with the M&MTB's first Doncaster area timetable dated 2 July 1961.

Note the location of the original depot in the centre of the map on the northern side of Doncaster Road. The new depot was built close by on the southern side, opening in June 1965.

Image: Melbourne Tram Museum collection

In January 1968, the Board also acquired two further Doncaster routes from Rouch and Kennedy and so became the sole bus operator in the area.

The Board initially operated the acquired routes using some of the Withers' fleet supplemented by the Board's AEC Regal Mark III half cab buses.

However, the acquired buses and depot in Doncaster Road were not adequate for its operations. Seven of the 20 Withers' buses and all eleven of the Rouch and Kennedy buses were sold.

RIGHT: M&MTB AEC Regal Mark III half cab bus 588 operating the Warrandyte to Melbourne via Templestowe service (early 1960s).

Approximately 40 Mk IIIs were 'bobtailed' (shortened) to operate on driver-only routes.

Photo: M&MTB staff recruitment brochure, Melbourne Tram Museum collection



RIGHT: Site of the new Doncaster Bus Depot on the southern side Doncaster Road (c1963). The depot opened on 8 June 1965.

Photo: Melbourne Tram Museum collection



ABOVE: M&MTB bus transfer ticket for the Doncaster area (1970s).

Passengers who wished to change to a second bus or tram to complete their journey would receive a cash fare ticket along with this transfer ticket clipped to show their nominated route. This entitled them to board a second vehicle without paying an additional fare.

Image: Melbourne Tram Museum collection

RIGHT: M&MTB AEC Regal Mark VI bus 725 departing the brand new Doncaster Bus Depot in mid 1965.

Photo: Melbourne Tram Museum collection



New buses and depot

The M&MTB was granted authority by the State Government to buy one hundred new buses, and to build a state-of-the-art bus depot to service the new routes in Doncaster.

The buses were AEC Regal Mark VI, all the chassis having been imported from the English manufacturer, while the bodies were built in Moorabbin by Freighter Lawton. Originally, Freighter Lawton had planned on building them in Adelaide, until the State Government insisted that the bodies had to be built in Victoria.

To some, the Mark VI buses looked like boxes on wheels. Their truncated appearance was the result of an extended industrial dispute during the 1950s over driver-only bus operations by the M&MTB. Approximately 40 Mark IIIs were 'bobtailed' (shortened) around this time to permit their use as driver-only buses.

The union had won its case in the Arbitration Commission, ensuring that the driver-only buses used by the M&MTB would have seats for no more than 31 passengers. The decision was in distinct contrast to the position for private bus operators, who had no such limits on driver-only buses. This is why many M&MTB buses looked distinctly short.

The new bus depot was built on a green-field site, opening on 8 June 1965, while the first of the new buses ran on 9 November 1964.

RIGHT: M&MTB AEC Regal Mark III half cab bus 513 on a Park Orchards service shortly before its withdrawal (1980).

*Photo: David Oaten collection,
Bus & Coach Society of Victoria*



Changing operators

In 1983, all M&MTB tram and bus services and metropolitan rail services were taken over by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (The Met).

From 1993 the Doncaster bus routes were franchised to a series of companies as part of the general privatisation of public transport initiated by the Kennett Government: the National Bus Company (1993-2004), the Ventura Bus Company (2004-2013) and Transdev (2013 onwards).

In retrospect, the construction of Doncaster Bus Depot and acquisition of the Mark VI buses is notable for being the only time the Bolte Government (1955-1971) made a major investment in the M&MTB. It occurred in the aftermath of the 1961 'credit squeeze' which had threatened the electoral prospects of governments around Australia.

Acknowledgements

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Geoff Brown

RIGHT: M&MTB Leyland National bus 825 working Templestowe via Box Hill and Doncaster North (c1980).

This model was introduced by the M&MTB in 1975.

*Photo: Graeme Turnbull collection,
Bus & Coach Society of Victoria*

