TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATIONS
INTRODUCTION

Patterns of settlement were strongly influenced by transport options and in particular, by the development of the railway. This chapter charts the transport developments in the study area from rivers and waterways to bridges, roads, railways and tramways.

Early access to the study area was by river and bank-to-bank transport was provided by a thriving and competitive industry of punt and ferry operators. Next followed bridges, whose construction and up-keep sparked rivalry across municipal boundaries, but opened important new routes into the study area. There is a section on the origins and development of the main road routes through the study area, which functioned first as roads for horse-drawn vehicles. The role of Prahran City Surveyor, later founding Chairman of the Country Roads Board, William Calder, in instigating road improvements suitable for the motor transport age, is noted. The development of solutions to later problems such as the flow of traffic through the study area, particularly the Monash Freeway, had a significant physical and social impact on the municipality in the post-war era.

The chapter also describes the important role of railways and tramways in shaping the residential and commercial development of the study area, particularly the rise of commuting and growth of shopping centres.

This chapter incorporates the following themes:

- Australian Heritage Criteria (AHC)
- Developing local, regional and national economies – Moving goods and people; Building settlements, towns and cities – Supplying urban services.
HISTORY

4.1 Water crossings and travels –
    punts and ferries

In the very early days of settlement the lack of roads and
bridges meant that access to the study area for some visitors
and settlers was along the Yarra River by boat. Punts and
ferries were important to the development of the study
area throughout the nineteenth century and even into the
twentieth by which stage most of the major roads and bridges
had been constructed.

Rev. Waterford travelled by boat when he visited Gardiner
at his station in June 1838 (Cooper, 1935:10). Although
punt services connecting roads across the river were soon
established, river transport remained an alternative for
some early settlers – the Bell family, for example, who lived
at Avoca on the banks of the river in the 1850s, travelled
by boat for their weekly trip to church in Melbourne
(Cooper, 1924:53).

Watt’s ferry service was established on the Yarra River,
downstream from the present Princes Bridge, in 1838.
R.A. Balbirnie, one of the study area’s largest landholders,
set up a rival punt service near Watt’s ferry. When a wooden
bridge was built to link Swanston Street with St Kilda Road
in 1845, Balbirnie leased it and collected the tolls (Priestley,
1984:34; Malone, 2002:9; Cooper, 1924:36). Road access
to the study area was then via St Kilda Road and along
the rough bush track originally known as Gardiners Creek
Road that eventually became known as Toorak Road (see
section 4.4.1). John Hodgson began a ferry service upstream
from Chapel Street around 1844, and Brander’s ferry
operated near the Botanic Gardens. From the mid 1850s
another punt crossed the river at Richmond, thus giving the
name Punt Road to the track that formed the western border
of the area (Priestley, 1984:41).

Twickenham Ferry service, thought to have been established
in 1880, carried passengers across from Grange Road,
Toorak, linking the area with Hawthorn. The Burnley Ferry,
which operated from 1896 to 1944, crossed from Williams
Road, South Yarra, to Burnley Street, Richmond. Passengers
had to descend from the high ground on the South Yarra side
via a flight of steps, then cross the swamp on a boardwalk to
reach the ferry (Malone, 2002:10, 11 and 19).

As late as 1931 a new ferry service was commenced
between South Yarra and Princes Bridge, and seems
to have been a success for a few years. Passengers
embarked from jetties at Punt Road and Caroline Street
4.2 Bridges

4.2.1 Church Street bridge

Until 1857 the only bridge linking the study area with Melbourne was Balbirnie’s wooden bridge connecting Swanston Street and St Kilda Road across the Yarra River. This bridge was replaced by a stone bridge, and then by the present Princes Bridge in the 1880s. Local councils, including Prahran and Malvern, contributed to its cost (Malvern Archives).

The first bridge leading directly into the study area was built across the Yarra to link Chapel Street with Church Street, Richmond. It was initiated by both Richmond and Prahran Councils as a way of encouraging trade and establishing the two streets as main roads through the growing suburbs. An iron bridge, bought by the Victorian Government from Britain as surplus from the Crimean War, was installed and opened in October 1857. In 1909 Prahran Council first became concerned about the safety of the bridge, and there was an attempt to close it in 1914, but years of campaigning by Prahran Council were necessary before the State Government and Richmond Council would consider a replacement. According to Cooper (1924:163–78), Prahran Council wanted a bridge that would ‘reflect credit on the City of Prahran … a structure of beauty and permanence … worthy to be the highway to the northern city gate’. The resulting three-span Monier arch bridge, designed by leading architect Harold Desbrowe Annear and engineer J.A. Laing, and completed in 1924, fitted the bill, and is still an impressive entry into the study area, although now altered at the Richmond end to accommodate the Monash Freeway. Technically, it was the culmination of a century of development in reinforced concrete in Victoria, led by (Sir) John Monash, the founder of Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company, which built the bridge (see Alves, Holgate and Taplin, 1998, Introduction; Heritage Victoria citation). The new bridge stimulated development in Chapel Street by allowing the tramway service to be connected to Richmond (this will be discussed in Chapter 5).
4.2.2 Hoddle bridge
At Punt Road the punt continued in operation until the opening of the bridge at Anderson Street (now known as the Morell Bridge) in 1898. Meanwhile, a footbridge was built near Punt Road in 1866, to be replaced by another footbridge in the 1890s. This steel truss bridge was dismantled and moved to Kensington, where it linked the Melbourne Abattoirs with the sale yards across the Maribyrnong River. The present Hoddle Bridge was built by the Country Roads Board in 1938. It is a four-span reinforced concrete girder bridge, which, at the time of construction had the longest spans of their kind in Australia. This bridge immediately resulted in Punt Road becoming a link in the major route connecting Melbourne’s northern and southern suburbs (Priestley, 1984:41–2; Country Roads Board, Annual Report, 1939:35; Lay, 2003:152).

4.2.3 MacRobertson bridge
The MacRobertson Bridge, a three-span steel truss construction, was built in 1934 and opened as part of Victoria’s centenary celebrations. It replaced the Twickenham Ferry at Grange Road. The bridge was funded by a grant from confectioner MacPherson Robertson (Lay, 2003:152). It was altered and extended in 2000 as part of the City Link project, which upgraded the Monash Freeway that passes underneath.

4.2.4 Bridging Gardiners Creek
Gardiners Creek presented another barrier to the study area for those travelling to and from the east between the Malvern municipality and neighbouring Hawthorn. Early creek crossings were fords, or logs placed across the creek or in the stream. Such crossings and their approaches became ‘glue pots’ of mud during wet weather, and were often impassable.

Timber bridges were constructed across the creek at Glenferrie Road in 1857, Toorak Road in 1860 and High Street in 1861. There was a toll gate at the High Street bridge. Some years later the poor condition of these bridges prompted lengthy negotiations between the Gardiner Road Board (later Malvern Shire Council) and the Road Boards of Hawthorn and Boroondara, revealing municipal rivalries that existed at the time. Eventually the bridges were replaced. A new bridge was built at High Street in 1891, and at Toorak Road in 1915, the latter being washed away in the 1934 flood (Lay, 2005:151, 153 and 189). These old creek crossings are now lost beneath the Monash Freeway. The wooden bridge connecting Hawthorn and Malvern along Glenferrie Road was replaced by a brick bridge some time around 1890. The brick bridge was widened in 1912 with an unusual reinforced concrete addition when the tramway was extended into Malvern (Cooper 1935:82–92, Alves, Holgate and Taplin, pp.127–28). It can still be seen under the Monash Freeway.

[xxxvi First Chapel Street bridge, erected in 1857 and shown here in 1921. (SLHC Reg. No. 9536)]
Outer Circle Railway – Black Bridge over Gardiners Creek, c. 1930.
4.3 Roads

As we shall see, the main east-west and north-south roads in the study area originated from the grid lines drawn on Hoddle’s subdivision plan of the Parish of Prahran. The lines ignored the area’s topography, so the gradients of some roads emphasise the natural undulations of the landscape to this day. The later development of main roads is best understood in the context of the development of Melbourne’s metropolitan road system, as most of them are on transport links through the study area, linking northern and southern suburbs, and the south-east with central Melbourne. The strong grid pattern was reflected in the smaller streets and lanes between the main roads associated with the complex patterns of subdivision that have taken place throughout the study area’s history. Deviations from the grid occurred particularly along the interface with the waterways to the north and east (notably Alexandra Avenue and Malvern Road), and in some of the subdivisions in Toorak during the inter-war and post-war period.

4.3.1 Following Hoddle’s grid – early development of main roads

The northernmost line on the Prahran Parish plan coincided with the track that led from St Kilda Road to Gardiners Creek, which was originally known as Gardiners Creek Road. In 1851 the track turned south-east and followed the creek towards Oakleigh, on the stock route to Dandenong and Western Port, and ultimately to Gippsland. When the Governor of Victoria took up residence in Toorak House in 1854, the western section of Gardiners Creek Road became the study area’s most important thoroughfare – in the eyes of the government – and it was the first to be graded and surfaced. Gardiners Creek Road began to be known by its present name of Toorak Road from the 1850s, but the old name was still in use until 1898 (Lay, 2003:150–1).

Other east-west roads across the study area were also used as early routes to Dandenong. High Street and Malvern Road both joined the route along the Gardiners Creek to Oakleigh. Indeed, High Street was once called Middle Dandenong Road. By 1856 the main route to Dandenong followed the southern survey line of the study area – the road we now know as Dandenong Road. The route commenced at St Kilda junction, heading east along Wellington Street. At Chapel Street it widened into the three-chain road that Hoddle, with some foresight, had reserved as a stock route before the land was sold (Lay, 2003, 153–8).
The northern end of Chapel Street remained a rough track to the river until the construction of the bridge in 1857. As soon as the bridge linked the study area with Richmond, Chapel Street became the main thoroughfare for the study area. At that time, and for many years after, Chapel Street went through a deep cutting north of Toorak Road. The years of mining the clay for brickmaking eventually levelled the high ground and eliminated the cutting (Malone, 1983:8–9).

Punt Road was also an insignificant thoroughfare, especially at the steeply sloping northern end, until construction of Hoddle Bridge in 1936 connected it with Hoddle Street. Punt Road thus became part of Melbourne’s key north-south route, from Epping to Port Phillip Bay, in what appears to have been part of Hoddle’s greater plan. By 1944 Punt Road was an ‘extremely busy main highway’, and in 1969 the section between Swan Street and the Yarra River was the state’s busiest road (Wilde, 1993:31–32; Lay, 2003:186–87).

Glenferrie Road, named after Glen Ferrie, the property of Peter Ferrie, which was on the corner of Toorak Road, followed a subdivision line from Hawthorn. Originally known as Barkly Road, it was an early route between Richmond and Brighton (Lay 2003:189) and was also known by a more prosaic title incorporating those suburb names.

Burke Road is believed to have originated as an Aboriginal track to the north of the study area and formed the western boundary of Elgar’s Special Survey that covered present-day Balwyn and Box Hill. The road reservation was extended south into and through the study area in the early 1850s before the land was subdivided and sold. The section running through the study area was known as Charleville Road until the name of the entire road was changed to Burke Road in honour of the explorer Robert O’Hara Burke, in the 1860s (Lay, 2003:189–90).

Warrigal Road is another main route stretching from north to south through the eastern suburbs. It formed the parish boundary, and also the municipal boundary at the south-east of the study area (Lay, 2003:19–21).
4.3.2 Changing modes of transport – from horses to motor vehicles

In the nineteenth century the ownership of a carriage was an indication of wealth and status. The large houses and mansions of the wealthy had stables and coach houses for their equipages. Avoca (8 Gordon Grove, South Yarra) built in the 1850s still has its stables and coach house (Prathran Conservation Study, precinct 1–10). The stables at Stonington still exist; indeed the house itself is a reminder of horse-drawn transport as it was built by John Wagner, an owner of Cobb and Co. Malone has noted that the owners of a number of villas on large allotments in Denbigh Road, Armadale, had carriages and stables (Malone, 2005:30).

Those who could not afford horse-drawn vehicles of their own walked, or they could hire a cab. There were two livery stables at Toorak Village, and one at 23 Northcote Road, Armadale. After the advent of the railways there were cab stands at railway stations, functioning in much the same way as taxi ranks do now (Paxton 1983:25 and 29; Malone, 2005:16). One of the last known cab shelters in Melbourne was recently reinstated on its original site in the grounds of Christ Church, Toorak Road, at the south-west corner of Punt Road just outside the study area.
Delivers of milk, meat and other household necessities were made by horse and cart. The horse-drawn milk cart persisted well into the 1960s; however delivery horses were beginning to be replaced by motors after World War I. Coach builders proliferated in Prahran’s industrial district before the war. A. W. Hinton and Son, whose workshops were in Izett Street, gradually switched to building and servicing motor trucks, until the firm eventually became panel beaters (Wilde, 1993:140–42).

Alan Martin and Joseph King established the coach building business, Martin and King, in a rented shop in High Street, Armadale, in 1888, moving to larger premises at 85 High Street by 1909. The firm continued as a family company into the twentieth century, and diversified its operations for the new transport era by manufacturing train carriages and buses, and, following a move out of the study area, car bodies for the Ford Motor Company (Malvern Archives). The Armadale Coach Factory in Kooyong Road, south of High Street, did not make the transition to the motor era, and disappeared soon after the turn of the century (Malone, 2005:25).

Horse-drawn buses operated along the main roads. An early experiment in public motor transport in the study area was the steam bus that operated between Prahran and Malvern for a few months in 1905–1906. It was said to be the first public transport of its kind, but it was found to be unreliable, and abandoned in favour of the reliable horse (A Place in History, No. 41).

James Paxton, who grew up in Toorak in the early twentieth century, described the roads as ‘rough and unsealed’ in his youth. He was aware of only 20 cars in the district in 1909 (Paxton, 1983:12, 19). However, motor vehicles were soon to gain pre-eminence as the major form of transport not only in the study area, but throughout Victoria and the rest of Australia. Priestly (1984:170) notes that:

Road construction accelerated after 1918 as road traffic was undergoing its spectacular motorization. By 1924, there were nearly ninety thousand motor cars, lorries and cycles registered in Victoria, although that was still less than half the estimated number of road vehicles pulled by horses. Just four years later, horse and motor vehicle numbers were balanced, and thereafter the fast-breeding petrol engine took precedence.
4.3.3 Twentieth century improvements and the rise of motorised transport

As the number of motor vehicles increased, so did the need for improvements to roads. The Prahran municipality was fortunate to have William Calder as its City Surveyor from 1897 to 1913, and it was he who instigated a program of road improvements during the early stages of the gradual transition to motorised transport. In an effort to find the best and most economical surface, a variety of materials were tried. The new Neuchatel asphalt was laid in Commercial Road in 1912, and in 1919 red gum blocks, with a coating of tar, were laid in Malvern Road. Concrete surfaces were tried in other places, particularly in residential subdivisions during the inter-war period. Bluestone was used extensively for kerb and channelling during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but was gradually replaced by concrete kerbing by the mid-twentieth century. During the 1920s almost all of Prahran’s streets were surfaced. Calder went on to become the first Chairman of the Country Roads Board, when it was established in 1913. Calder’s house, Kia Ora, still stands at 25 Denbigh Road, Armadale (Wilde, 1993: 20–21; Malone, 2005:30).

A late addition to the main road network was Alexandra Avenue, which was opened between Chapel Street and Williams Road during the interwar period. Earlier stages, from Punt Road to the Cremorne railway bridge were opened by 1914, and to Chapel Street by 1918. This section of Alexandra Avenue between Chapel Street and Williams Road was to be the only major addition to the road network in the study area until the 1960s.

As the volume of motor traffic increased on Melbourne’s roads, and as the metropolis expanded outwards, particularly to the east, the study area’s main roads became busier and more congested. Large volumes of traffic were travelling through the study area between the city and outer suburbs to the south and east. At a local level, the design of subdivisions began to explore ways to discourage through traffic from the inter-war period onwards. The layout of Montalto Avenue in Toorak is one example of a subdivision that was intended to discourage through traffic, while the increasing use of cul-de-sacs is another.

In the 1950s the State Government began considering ways of easing congestion on Melbourne’s roads, and in the 1960s the Metropolitan Transport Committee recommended a plan that provided for 307 miles of freeways and arterial roads. Two freeways were to impinge on the study area, but the F2, which was to follow the railway line through Prahran, was not built, owing to strong local opposition to the proposal (Wilde, 1993:96–99). Although there was also considerable public opposition to the second freeway proposal, the South-Eastern Freeway – now known as the Monash Freeway – leading from Punt Road to the south-eastern suburbs was eventually constructed in stages over four decades commencing in the 1960s.
The Monash Freeway had its origins in Melbourne’s first freeway, the section of the South-Eastern Freeway stretching along the northern Yarra bank from Hoddle Street to Grange Road, which was opened in 1962. An extension to Toorak Road was completed in 1969. During the 1970s the Mulgrave Freeway approached Melbourne from the south-east. Neither freeway crossed the study area, but plans were made to link the two freeways through what was called the ‘C3 route’, which followed the Gardiners Creek valley on the Malvern side. The use of the valley as a road corridor had been suggested as early as 1929, in the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission’s Report. However, 45 years later the prospect of a freeway going through the then City of Malvern sparked unprecedented protest in the community and a number of activist groups formed. They protested against the proposed demolition of hundreds of houses that were in the path of the freeway, the loss of large areas of parkland and sports grounds, damage to the natural environment and the noise and pollution the freeway would produce. These protests delayed construction of the freeway for several years, during which time traffic congestion increased in Malvern’s streets, highlighting the reason for the freeway proposal. The linking section was eventually completed in the early 1990s, and the name of the whole freeway was changed to the Monash Freeway in 1999 (Priestley, 1984:269–70; Strahan, 1989, ch.11; Lay, 2003:198 and 211–12). The Monash Freeway now takes many thousands of cars daily through Stonnington to and from Melbourne’s outer south-eastern suburbs, as well as providing access to the area for its residents.

Other major improvements were made to traffic flow on Dandenong Road, which formed a bottleneck at Chapel Street where it originally connected with the much narrower Wellington Street that eventually intersected with Punt Road and St Kilda Road at St Kilda Junction. Although St Kilda Junction is outside the study area, it was the funnel through which traffic on two of the municipality’s busiest thoroughfares – Punt and Dandenong roads – passed, to join traffic from St Kilda Road. From the 1950s remedies were sought for the increasing traffic congestion at this major junction, but it was not until 1968 before the opening of the major intersection works. This included a new partially sunken roadway (Queens Way) passing under Punt Road and St Kilda Road that connected Dandenong Road (which until then had terminated at Chapel Street) to Queens Road and thence to the city. The associated ramps and concrete walls became a feature of the modern traffic management environment (Wilde, 1993:84), and created a barrier that effectively divided Wellington Street from Windsor.
4.4 Railways

Railways had a significant influence upon the development of the study area. As we shall see in later chapters, they stimulated the residential and commercial development that had already begun slowly in the western part of the municipality. The fast and frequent transport system enabled workers to settle in the area and commute to jobs outside the area. It also brought shoppers into the area, particularly to the Windsor end of Chapel Street, which developed quickly in the 1860s (Wilde, 1993:8).

4.4.1 Early private railways

Rail travel was introduced to Victoria in the 1850s by private companies, and two of the lines serving the study area had their origins in private railway services. In 1857 the Melbourne and Suburban Railway opened a line to St Kilda. In 1859–1860 this line was extended to Brighton by another company, the St Kilda and Brighton Railway Company, closed the loop line from St Kilda and ran their trains directly to Brighton through Windsor (Cooper, 1924:179–84). A reminder of the loop line is the Windsor Siding Park, close to the Windsor Station.

South Yarra Station located on Toorak Road (originally known as Gardiners Creek Road Station) was constructed in 1862 by Melbourne and Suburban Railway, and was altered in 1883, 1915–16 and again in 1918 to accommodate the growth of the train system, which resulted in new lines to serve increasing patronage. It is now thought to be one of only two surviving stations in the metropolitan area that were originally built by private companies.

In 1860 the Melbourne and Suburban Railway opened another line through Richmond to South Yarra, Prahran and Windsor. Substantial engineering works altered the landscape for this line, including an embankment constructed across the swamp at the south of the Yarra River, and a deep cutting through Forrest Hill. In 1862 the Melbourne and Suburban Railway bought out the St Kilda and Brighton Railway Company, closed the loop line from St Kilda and ran their trains directly to Brighton through Windsor (Cooper, 1924:179–84). A reminder of the loop line is the Windsor Siding Park, close to the Windsor Station.

4.4.2 Developing state railway systems in the late nineteenth century

In 1878 the Victorian Government purchased the existing railways through the study area as part of its project to build a line through Oakleigh to Gippsland. The new Oakleigh line, which was opened in 1879, ran through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra (Wilde, 1993:7).

The arrival of the Oakleigh railway coincided with the beginnings of the land boom that saw huge urban growth in the study area. As we have seen, the population of the municipality of Prahran almost doubled in the decade to 1891 (Tibbits, 1983:34) and there was also considerable development in the western part of the Malvern municipality. Proximity to the rail services was a major selling point used by estate agents in all parts of Melbourne, and residential subdivisions closest to the stations generally sold first. The introduction of special workingmen’s fares in 1882 also encouraged workers to settle in suburbs along rail routes, enabling people to move out from the inner areas where they worked (Priestley, 1984:152).
The new railway cut through estates and communities, changing the shape of urban development. This can be seen around Armadale Station, where each side of the railway developed quite differently. Malone describes the eastern side as ‘solidly residential’ with its late Victorian and early twentieth century houses. The west side was a rail reserve and remained undeveloped for a long time. It accommodated a wood merchant, police station and scout hall, and some public housing – Victory Square (now demolished), built for war widows after World War I, and the Ministry of Housing’s Tillotson Terrace units, built as recently as 1988 (Malone, 2005:2–4).

Meanwhile, the Malvern Shire Council had campaigned for the Oakleigh railway line to take a route through the Glen Iris Valley, thus stimulating development in their shire, but they had to wait until 1890 for a line to serve the eastern part of the shire. The new Glen Iris line was built from Burnley to Oakleigh, joining the new Outer Circle Line north of Oakleigh. The Outer Circle Line was built to link Gippsland with North Melbourne through the eastern fringe of Melbourne, thus bypassing the city centre. The line was carried across Gardiners Creek on a long timber trestle bridge, known as the Black Bridge. This bridge was on the site of the Malvern Valley Golf Course, and was demolished in 1938. The junction of the two new lines was at Waverley Road Station, on the south side of Waverley Road about 500 metres east of Belgrave Road. The Glen Iris line to Oakleigh opened in 1890, but the expected residential development it was to serve was stalled following the economic collapse. As there was insufficient traffic to keep the line viable at the eastern end, the line beyond Darling was closed in 1895. The ill-fated Outer Circle Line also closed in sections between 1893 and 1895 (Cooper, 1924:306–07; Fiddian, 1997:36–37, 80; A Place in History, No.66). Evidence of the Waverley Road Station can be seen in the Urban Forest.

4.4.3 Twentieth century improvements

In 1911 the Railways Commissioners refused Malvern Council’s request to reopen the Darling to Oakleigh section of the Glen Iris line, but instead considered extending the line across Gardiners Creek to Glen Waverley. This extension was eventually authorised in 1926. New stations were built at Malvern East and Holmesglen in 1929, and the final section to Glen Waverley opened in 1930. Again, the expected urban development was delayed by economic depression, and also by the imposition of a Construction Rate on property along the line to finance its construction (Cooper, 1935:202–4; Fiddian, 1997:79–80; Raworth and Foster, 1998).

Apart from the extension of lines, one the biggest projects undertaken by the Victorian Railways in the early twentieth century was the electrification of the network. Work on the electrification of Melbourne’s suburban railways was planned as early as 1914, but was delayed by World War I. In May 1919 Melbourne’s first electric train service ran on the Essendon to Sandringham line, through the South Yarra Station to Windsor section in the study area. The Dandenong line, including the South Yarra to Malvern section, was electrified in 1922, as was the line to Darling (Fiddian, 1997:57). This project included regrading of the line to Oakleigh and the duplication of the line to Darling.
As a result, a series of new stations were constructed at Armadale, Hawksburn, Malvern and Toorak. These stations were built to an almost identical design including a two-storey central building, curtain wall and verandah on platform four, red brick construction with render banding, cantilever verandahs, ornately shaped parapets and arched openings with render voussoirs. They were designed by J.W. Hardy, chief architect for the Department of Way and Works, between 1908 and 1918.

As we shall see, the electrification of the rail network coincided with the expansion of the electric tramways. This led to the need for grade separations at key intersections where the tram and train lines crossed. This is discussed further in section 4.5.2.
4.5 Tramways

Like the railways before them, the tramway network had a major influence on the pattern of development within much of the study area, both residential and commercial. While the early cable trams were limited to just Chapel Street and part of Toorak Road, the formation of the Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust was the catalyst for a massive expansion of the network, which enabled the suburban development of then-inaccessible areas of the municipality. As we shall see, in the first decades of the twentieth century new development essentially followed the extension of the electric tram network as existing routes were extended and new routes opened.

4.5.1 Cable trams

Melbourne’s first cable tram commenced taking passengers between Spencer Street and Richmond in 1885. The trams were pulled along by a constantly moving underground cable, which was powered by a huge steam-driven winding engine. Unlike the American systems, the entire operation was operated by one company, with no competing lines. The Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company was granted a monopoly franchise from 1885 to 1916, after which the system was handed over to the government. The system was so comprehensive within its area of operation, that there was no way for a competing electric tram service to get into the city centre. As we shall see, electric trams, when they started in Melbourne, were for the most part acting as feeders to the cable system (www.railpage.org.au/tram/cable.html).
Trams could not cross the Yarra River until bridges strong enough to take their weight could be built. After the new Princes Bridge was opened in 1888 cable tram routes extended from Swanston Street along St Kilda Road to Windsor and along Toorak Road to South Yarra, turning into Chapel Street towards Prahran. The Toorak Road line was extended to Irving Road in 1889, and the Windsor line was extended to the St Kilda Esplanade in 1891. An engine house for the cable winding machinery was built on the corner of Chapel Street and Toorak Road, while a smaller engine house for the trams to St Kilda was in Wellington Street (now outside the study area) (Priestley, 1984:130–31; Wilde, 1983:8–9; Malone, 1998:17, 1999:38).

As we shall see in Chapter 6, these early cable trams played a major role in the early development of Chapel Street and Toorak Roads as popular shopping centres, giving access to the shops for people from outside the study area as well as local shoppers. This important role was continued and expanded when the operation of the network was taken over in 1920 by the newly formed Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board and the system was gradually electrified and integrated with the new electric trams.
4.5.2 Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust

With the tram system restricted to the inner suburbs, partly as protection for the railway system’s revenue, only the western part of the study area around Prahran was serviced by the cable trams. Out at Malvern the Shire Council began campaigning in the 1890s for the right to run a municipal tramway system. After protracted negotiations with the government and Prahran Council, an Act of Parliament brought the Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust into being in 1907. It was the first of the municipal tramway trust to be formed and led to the establishment of similar tramway trusts in other municipalities.

The Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust was the most successful of the municipal tramway trusts that developed Melbourne’s electric tram network in the second decade of the twentieth century. The assets and operations of the Trust, along with those of all other tramway companies and trusts, were taken over by the newly formed Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board in 1920.

Work began on the Trust’s first lines along High Street, Glenferrie Road and Wattletree Road in 1909. Poles supporting the overhead electric lines were installed along the routes, and a large power house and tram shed was built in Coldblo Road, on the failed 1892 Coldblo Estate. The first Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust tram rolled out of the Coldblo depot on 30 May 1910. The Trust’s first lines were along High Street from Charles Street, Prahran, to Tooronga Road Malvern, and via Glenferrie Road and Wattletree Road to Burke Road East, Malvern (Cooper, 1935:202–17).

The new tramways were a great success. Over the following decade existing routes were extended and new routes opened. The High Street line was extended to Punt Road in 1911 and to St Kilda Road in 1912 and eastwards to Glen Iris in 1914. The route along Wattletree and Dandenong Roads to Chapel Street was opened in 1911. Extensions beyond the study area reached Caulfield and St Kilda in 1911, Hawthorn and Kew via Glenferrie Road in 1913, and Camberwell Station via Malvern and Burke Roads in 1917 (Malvern Archives; George et al, 1997). Initially the electric tram network acted as a feeder to the cable trams, which maintained their monopoly over the city centre, but after both systems were taken over by the MMTB in 1920, the old cable tram routes were progressively electrified and the system was integrated.
The development of the tram network also led to improvements in roads and bridges. To enable trams to cross waterways, bridges had to be wide enough and strong enough. The Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust’s extension of the Glenferrie Road line to Hawthorn in 1912 necessitated the widening of the brick bridge across Gardiners Creek. This addition was built by John Monash’s Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company, using concrete as an economic alternative to brick. Interestingly, the relatively new reinforced concrete technology was not trusted to bear the weight of trams, so the lines were laid across the old brick section of the bridge (Alves, Holgate and Taplin, p.128). Reinforced concrete had proved its worth by the time the Church Street Bridge was built in 1924, and a new tram link was made with Richmond across the bridge. This relieved some of the pressure from the St Kilda Road route (Cooper, 1924:311), and gave direct access between Richmond and Prahran for both workers and shoppers.

As we have seen, the development of the new electric trams network roughly coincided with the electrifying and upgrade of the railways. A consequence of both projects was a State Government directive that grade separations had to be created at key intersections of the tram and train routes. This necessitated the regrading of the railway line from Malvern to Hawksburn.

A cutting was made for the railway, with bridges at High Street and Malvern Road (where it crossed Orrong Road) and Glenferrie Road replacing the former level crossings. This meant that Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn Stations had to be lowered and reconstructed (Tibbits, 1983:34; Malone, 2005:3). The tram shelter on the railway overpass in Malvern Road is a reminder of the relationship between the two transport systems.
The theme of Transport and Communications is illustrated by a variety of places that have important heritage values. These values are sometimes expressed in tangible ways, such as by surviving fabric (such as buildings, structures, trees and landscapes), but are also apparent in the associations and meanings embodied by the place for different communities. Like other inner-metropolitan areas, the study area illustrates the close relationship between the development of transport networks and the pattern of suburban development in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, the study area is notable for how it illustrates particular phases such as the importance of first the railways and then the tramways to the development of retail centres in the study area and for its close associations with the development of the tramway network. This chapter provides a summary of the values associated with these places and provides a representative list of places. For further examples, reference should be made to the heritage studies and reports listed in the bibliography.

River transport and crossings, punts and ferries

No physical evidence of early river transport or punts and ferries remains; however, they are remembered in place names such as Punt Road.

Roads and bridges

The places associated with this theme provide rare evidence in the form of stables and other buildings that illustrate the importance of horse-drawn transport in the era before motor cars. The study area also provides evidence of the development of Melbourne’s road network, particularly during the twentieth century. Places associated with this theme include:

- Examples of stables are found at Stonnington and Toorak House. The stables formerly associated with Avoca have been converted to a private house, which is situated in Caroline Street, South Yarra. There are also some small stables in residential areas in Malvern.
- A. W. Hinton and Sons workshops in Izett Street
- William Calder’s house, Kia Ora, 25 Denbigh Road, Armadale
- Bluestone kerb and channelling is still extant in many streets throughout the study area, and is a key component of the historic character of these areas.
- Examples of inter-war concrete streets can be found in Lewes Drive (which includes a central island at the head of the court containing an original cast-iron lamp-post) and in the Coolgardie Precinct, and the Moorakne/Stonnington Precinct.
- Montalto Avenue is an example of an inter-war subdivision, which was designed to reduce through traffic.
- Early twentieth century boulevards and parkways – Dandenong Road, Alexandra Avenue
- Church Street Bridge, Hoddle Bridge, and the MacRobertson Bridge
- Monash Freeway viaduct as it crosses Glenferrie Road Bridge, which illustrates the development of road transport over a 50-year period
- St Kilda Junction and Dandenong Road extension (Queens Way) between the Junction and Chapel Street, both outside the study area, but emblematic of the physical changes made as a result of the increase in the car traffic in the post-war period and now a highly visible entry point and physical boundary to the study area.
Transport & communications

Railways

The study area is particularly notable in a metropolitan context as it provides evidence of all of the key historic phases of development of suburban railways including the early private companies in the mid-nineteenth century that led to the formation of the Victorian Railways, and the expansion and electrification of the system in the early twentieth century. The buildings and significant feats of engineering such as bridges and cuttings demonstrate the importance of railways to the development of Melbourne and Victoria in the nineteenth century. The study area is also notable for evidence of ‘failed’ systems such as the ill-fated Outer Circle Line, which demonstrates how the system over-extended its reach in the late nineteenth century. Places associated with the development of the railway network including station complexes, plantings, bridges, cuttings and other infrastructure are now an important part of the historic cultural landscapes of the study area. These places include:

- Windsor Railway Siding Park (part of the route of the abandoned St Kilda loop line)
- Armadale, Hawksburn, South Yarra, Malvern, and Windsor railway stations
- Remains of Waverley Road Station in the Malvern Urban Forest (site of part of the Outer Circle Line).

Tramways

The study area is particularly notable for its strong associations with the development of Melbourne’s electric tram network. The Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust (PMTT) was the first and most successful of the municipal tramway authorities formed prior to the establishment of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board. The former PMTT Depot in Glenferrie Road and the extensive network of trams within the study area and beyond are a testament to the extraordinary achievements of the PMTT in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Other places associated with this theme include:

- Former cable house corner Chapel Street and Toorak Road (part of the former Capitol Bakery building)
- Ornamental tram poles along Dandenong Road
- Tram shelter on railway bridge, Malvern Road, Armadale
- Bridges on High Street, Malvern Road and Glenferrie Road constructed to provide grade separation between electric trams and railways.

Update 1
Additional words inserted