

University of Adelaide



PUBLIC TRANSPORT BUILDINGS

OF

METROPOLITAN ADELAIDE

1839 – 1990

**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Architecture and Planning**

**in candidacy for
the degree of
Master of Architectural Studies**

**by
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PROLOGUE

SESQUICENTENARY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of public transport in South Australia occurred in early 1989, during the research for this thesis. The event passed unnoticed amongst the plethora of more noteworthy public occasions. Chapter 2 of this thesis records that a certain Mr. Spey, with his daily vanload of passengers and goods, started the first regular service operating between the City and Port Adelaide. The writer accords full credit to this unsung progenitor of the chain of events portrayed in the following pages, whose humble horse drawn *char à bancs* set out on its inaugural journey, in all probability on 28 January 1839.

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SUMMARY

This thesis begins with a historical study of the public transport systems of Adelaide and more particularly their buildings and artefacts. It examines how and why they came to be built and how well they performed in practice. The conclusion drawn is that they were generally satisfactory, but that many of these once useful buildings are now in disrepair or empty, while numerous tracts of land are unused. This rundown arose in the last forty years as public transport declined. At the same time the City was under heavy pressure to accept an ever increasing traffic volume, mainly private cars.

Two options available to Adelaide are discussed:

- (1) To continue the present transportation trends by tolerating traffic increase, leading eventually to the ultimate and irreversible folly of urban freeways.
- (2) To contain the growth of private cars and to recycle obsolete, rundown or vacant transport properties, and redevelop land and buildings. This will stimulate a comprehensive public transport service and thus promote a balance with the motor car.

The legacy of historic public transport buildings is examined, particularly those on the railways. Strong support is given to option (2) as the only alternative which will enable the City to develop and still retain the architectural characteristics of its built environment. Furthermore, this option would be put into effect quickly and without disruption at a fraction of the cost of the freeway alternative.

This thesis seeks to point the way towards limiting City car growth, and provides the means by the recycling of sound but underused buildings.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan, if applicable, if accepted for the award of the degree.

Andrew Kelt

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT OR REFERRED TO IN REFERENCES

ANR	Australian National Railways
ASER	Adelaide Station & Environs Redevelopment
CBD	Central Business District
DOT	Department of Transport
ETSA	Electricity Trust of South Australia
IEE	Institution of Electrical Engineers (U.K.)
LRT	Light Rail Transport or Light Rapid Transit
MATS	Metropolitan Adelaide Transportation Study
MET	Metropolitan Transit Authority (Melbourne Vic.)
MFP	Multi Function Polis
MTA	Metropolitan Transport Authority (proposed) S.A.
MTT	Metropolitan Tramways Trust. S.A.
NEAPTR	North East Area Public Transport Review
NETP	North East Transit Project.
<i>O-Bahn</i>	<i>Omnibusbahn</i> (Busway)
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SAR	South Australian Railways
STA (S.A.)*	State Transport Authority (S.A.)
STA (Vic.)	State Transport Authority (Vic.)
<i>S-Bahn</i>	<i>Stadtbahn</i> (City Railway or light rail)
TAB	Totalizator Agency Board.
TAFE	Technical and Further Education.
<i>U-Bahn</i>	<i>Untergrundbahn</i> (Metro or underground railway)
V/Line	Victorian Line (S.T.A. Vic)

* Where not otherwise stated in the text STA refers to South Australia only.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the legacy of public transport buildings, artefacts and lands inherited from past generations, and having done so evaluates the extent to which these could be recycled or adapted to help provide for the public transport needs of Adelaide through to the twenty-first century. It looks at the immense changes in personal mobility provided by the car in the post-war era, and the consequences to the environment. In particular it points out how the steady growth in car numbers distorts the inner urban built environment. The freeway solution is seen as a fruitless and irreversible exercise, while the more straightforward alternative of containing and limiting car growth is seen as preferable. For this to succeed it is necessary to adapt public transport modes, particularly rail, to meet future needs within the context of the Adelaide built environment.

History shows that this is no new concept. The idea of an electric railway for Adelaide goes back to 1903. It was supported by Webb, Railways Commissioner 1922 – 30, and the transfer of three lines in 1929 to the Municipal Tramways Trust resulted in the electrification of the Glenelg line, still Adelaide's only light rail. Gauge standardisation and electrification were again supported by the Royal Commission on Public Transport after the Second World War, but the 1950s saw short term financial expediency prevailing. Later the concept of the urban freeway took root, and culminated in the MATS study of 1968, most of which was not laid to rest until 1983.

This study accepts the proposed rail improvements as necessary preconditions for the updated light rail system which was envisaged in 1975, when the non-metropolitan lines were transferred to ANR. It concentrates on the buildings and the built environment in which it will operate, paying particular attention to the rich legacy of useful and charming 19th century railway buildings.

It examines the buildings of Adelaide's public transport systems in their historical context and it ascertains that few have kept pace with changing circumstances. It makes modest proposals for the re-use of existing buildings to meet future needs. The thesis is divided into four overlapping Parts, dealing with historical periods in chronological order. Part I covers the years of horse transport from the first settlement to its demise. Part II looks at railway and electric tramway buildings up to 1918. Part III traces the inter-war development of Adelaide's public transport buildings. Part IV examines the post-war era, and in particular the impact on the Adelaide built environment of the growth in car numbers. It also scrutinises the many transportation studies of the post-war years, particularly those which, if they had been implemented, would have had profound effects upon Adelaide.

It finds that although large scale city and suburban development has taken place, this is not of the magnitude which has taken place in comparably sized cities such as Perth and Brisbane, or the larger cities of Melbourne and Sydney. In these the desire to maintain access to the City centres for all traffic, led to the construction of urban freeways, which drastically and irreversibly changed the character of these cities.

The broad streets of Adelaide have so far proved adequate to meet the traffic load, but recent studies indicate that they will not indefinitely do so into the 1990s. Adelaide, within its parkland setting, does not lend itself to the superimposition of a freeway solution. Nor indeed would this be warranted, for having survived with its original street plan intact since the first settlement, there is ample scope for providing a more attractive public transport system at less than the cost of the freeway alternative.

Post-war public transport development has concentrated on buses, while the railway has been largely neglected. The railways, however, contain the bulk of STA assets of buildings, artefacts and lands, and it is these which hold the key to providing Adelaide with the public transport services it will need.

To resolve the problems aggravated by continuous car growth and city transportation needs through to the next century, a supportive planning policy aimed at reducing car penetration and long term parking in the City will be needed. This, as well as a better public transport network operating within a more attractive built environment, are paramount in gaining public acceptance.

To put this into effect, the thesis examines proposals for recycling many of the present STA assets and these include:

- ▶ Upgrading or downgrading of buildings.
- ▶ Suggesting new uses for heritage or historic buildings.
- ▶ Identifying possible projects.
- ▶ Creating an acceptable and cohesive public image for public transport buildings and street furniture.
- ▶ Removing or demolishing those buildings or artefacts which have no viable use.
- ▶ Making better use of lands so released.

It is believed that this thesis will point the way towards the activation of a relatively simple series of construction measures which would not only lead to a better balanced transport system, but would improve the quality of the built environment by containing car growth, particularly in the City.