

CONFERENCES OF SEC SYSTEMS 1951 TO 1954 - notes by Alan Bradley 2-3-2021

1951

CAR RENOVATION - Painting - Makes and types of enamel used for various sections. Ballarat paint with the deep-skirt effect carried from end to end, and paint window sashes green to give larger window effect. Geelong use a lighter green than Ballarat and paint window sashes cream. Geelong considered that the salt-laden atmosphere in that city affects the colour. (P. 12-13)

CAR RENOVATION - Ceiling preparation for best lighting. Ballarat stated that all ceilings in their trams had beautiful veneered timber and they were reluctant to cover these with paint of better reflecting value. Geelong pointed out that the "Birney" trams had white painted ceilings and this lasted quite well, requiring an occasional washing only. From the comments it was apparent that painting is favourable because of improved lighting, but because of subsequent maintenance and the beauty of natural grained timber in ceilings the varnish should remain (P. 14).

Floor - treatment and covering. It was generally agreed by all Branches that Lastoleum was the best floor covering, but this is now difficult to obtain. Geelong is using "Malthold" but it is not particularly satisfactory and they are keen to follow Ballarat with "Flintkoten" experiments. (P. 15-16)

1952

CAR RENOVATION - Painting of bodies. Geelong reported in 1951 and 1952 that they had been in almost continual trouble in regard to the quality of enamels and undercoats used on tramcars. Four trams Nos. 17, 23, 38 and 40, now have been painted with the "Dulux" brands and no trouble has been experienced. (P. 14)

CAR RENOVATION - Periodicity of repaints. Geelong desired to ascertain if there were any standard or objective in regard to the periodicity of repaints. Five trams are painted, on an average, per year in that Branch, which means that each car will be painted approximately once every six years. Ballarat had no statistics regarding painting, but investigation had indicated that five years would be the maximum period between repaints to maintain a reasonable standard of appearance. (P. 15.)

CAR RENOVATION - Painting of ceilings. Works Division stated that the last conference decided that all ceilings should remain varnished in lieu of being painted white, this decision being mainly brought about by the fact that it was considered that the rain would splash in the ventilators and continual cleaning would be necessary. However, Geelong have fitted a centre panel to one of the new maximum traction cars and painted it white. Ballarat since have fitted a similar panel. These panels are lower than the ventilators and should not be affected by the weather. Pitting of this panel certainly enhances the appearance of the interior, but the idea could not be carried out on single truck cars with large hand-operated ventilators. Ballarat were strongly in favour of using the white panel throughout the maximum traction rolling stock. Geelong also drew attention to their remarks at the previous conference, that they consider the best finish for a ceiling is white synthetic enamel. The Bendigo Birney tram cars were given this treatment when in Geelong, and on a number of occasions at subsequent repaints it was necessary to only wash the ceiling. However, care must be exercised in using this treatment, as in other cars with ventilators opening on to the side roof it will be found that the white ceiling becomes extremely dirty with water splashing off the roof when it rains. (P. 16)

RULES GOVERNING EMPLOYEES - As far as the "Rules Governing Employees" are concerned, Works Division considered that the final book should definitely include a section covering depot employees. Bendigo were in favour of this idea but Ballarat were not. Geelong at first thought it best to keep the book purely for traffic employees, and anything for depot employees could be made a separate issue. In Geelong the only man who does any "live" work in the depot is issued with a "Blue Book." However in Geelong a number of shed employees operate in traffic. On occasions there has been such a demand for chartered trams that all shedmen on duty have been driving. 1952. (P. 27)

ONE-MAN OPERATION - Effect on maintenance. The Departmental Tramways Superintendent stated that the extension of one-man operation was now under consideration and, in view of this, it is necessary, first of all, to find out to what extent the Branches are able to supply trams to the traffic section as one-man trams and, secondly, to consider the effect in relation to maintenance and work in tramway depots generally, if the depot were called upon to change trams frequently during different periods of the day.

Ballarat advised that, from previous experience a few months ago when there were conditions existing in traffic making desirable the alternate use of single truck and maximum traction trams and their subsequent changing during the day, it certainly would be inconvenient to the depot staff, particularly in Ballarat where the depot is not in the centre of the system. At the time previously mentioned, it kept one man engaged continually taking trams in and out, and greatly interfered with the work of the depot. In consequence, Ballarat considered it very undesirable from a depot operation point of view.

In Geelong, the position is somewhat different, the proposed practice is at present in partial operation, effect of this on tramcar maintenance is as follows;-

- (a) A portion of the time of an Assistant Shedman is spent on changing cars over- and hence he is not available for maintenance work.
- (b) As more cars have to be available for traffic it is difficult to make them available for maintenance jobs that may take half a day or more.

Minor maintenance jobs taking approximately half an hour should not be affected. The extent to which this proposal can be carried out will be determined largely by the number of cars in each Branch.

In Geelong there are 17 trams suitable for one-man operation and 14 unsuitable - that is, 10 maximum traction and 4 Pengelly. (P. 34)

ITEM 5. ONE-MAN OPERATION

(b) Conversion of maximum traction trams. REMARKS: After discussion on this subject it generally was agreed that the maximum traction trams could be successfully converted for one-man operation and made quite safe, although there undoubtedly would be a few associated disadvantages. It was considered undesirable that any action be taken at this stage to actually convert or experiment on a tram. However, it was suggested and agreed to hold a meeting later in Ballarat, where a discussion could take place on site and all concerned could submit their ideas for criticism, from which a definite plan can be established. (P. 35)

ITEM 6. BRAKES.

Shoes - difference in patterns. Ballarat and Bendigo use brake shoes from Harding's Foundry, Ballarat, and Geelong from Central Foundry. There are three types of brake shoes in use in Geelong:

- No. 1 Pattern No. TP.189: On trams 1-10, 16, 17, 24, 26 and 28, 31-40.
- No. 2 Pattern No. TP.225: On trams 18-23 (Brill Radiax).
- Pony Pattern No. 407: On trams 31-40.

New brake shoe holders were installed on tramcar No. 16 on 3rd August, 1949 and on tramcar No. 17 on 15th August 1951 (these trams having the Brill Radiax trucks) in order that No. 1 brake shoes could be used instead of No. 2. These new brake shoe holders are giving every satisfaction. Sufficient new brake shoe holder castings now have been received to convert the brake gear on the remaining Brill Radiax trucks (18-23), and when fitted there will be only two types of brake shoes used in Geelong, namely No. 1 and pony. All No. 2 brake shoes will be used up before the conversion of the last tramcar. (P. 35-36)

SCRAPPING OF TRAMS IN BADLY DAMAGED CONDITION (P. 46-47)

This item was raised by Works Division following recommendation received from Bendigo that they scrap a tram which had been badly damaged in an accident, repair was estimated to be £500.

Works Division queried whether, up to the present time, trams involved in crashes had been repaired and not scrapped after accidents, to which the Departmental Tramways Superintendent replied that some years ago in Ballarat one tram was so badly damaged that the cost of repair exceeded the purchase price of a maximum traction car from M. & M.T.B. Consequently the tram was scrapped.

In Geelong, however, no trams have ever been scrapped following accidents.

Bendigo considered that they have a good reserve at present but are getting to the stage where the maintenance on the single truck cars is becoming excessive and, as a result of this, they are making more use of the "Birney" car. Until comparatively recently the "Birney" cars obtained from Geelong had hardly been used in Bendigo due to some prejudice, but they are now being used to a greater extent and have been favourably commented upon by the public. Bendigo queried what disadvantage Geelong had found in the "Birney" car, to which Geelong replied that it was from a loading point of view only. In the days when these trams were transferred to Bendigo the number of passengers in Geelong was increasing and the trams therefore were too small for certain routes.

Ballarat considered that, although they now had a sufficient reserve of rolling stock, in general it would be the policy to repair rather than scrap because of the trouble in securing further tramcars. However, if the damage were really of a major nature, repairs probably would not be economical.

Geelong stated that the recent acquisition of four maximum traction cars allowed for the retirement of some trams, it being intended to retire the three "Meadowbank" cars of 6'6" wheel base. However, in view of the possibility of extending one-man operation, this action has been temporarily postponed.

Works Division then advised that the case for scrapping of Tram No. 2 in Bendigo would be supported and, as carried out by Bendigo in this instance, careful thought relative to individual cases must be given before future scrappings.

1954

Smoking in rear saloons

At the 1953 conference it was decided that, following the conversion of maximum traction trams for dual operation, and certain complaints from the public, a recommendation should be made to the Engineer and Manager that smoking in rear saloons be permitted. Geelong did not favour the idea of allowing passengers to smoke in the rear saloon of the dual-operated tram, while not making this concession in other maximum traction trams and, therefore, preferred not to make any change. It was agreed that it would be preferable for each Branch to suit its own local conditions in this matter. (P. 4)

Maintenance cost reduction

During the year the Branches had given consideration to the possibility of working the track welder, at least for part of the time, without the services of a tradesman's assistant. Bendigo and Geelong remained firm in their opinion that there were no occasions on which they considered that their track welders could safely and efficiently work singly, but Ballarat maintained that conditions in their city were such that this was practicable except in places such as Sturt Street where traffic was heavy. It was agreed that in Geelong and Bendigo tram tracks were mainly on highways and therefore an assistant definitely was required. (P. 5)

CAR RENOVATION - Refresher coats.

The refresher coat technique, consisting of one coat of clear "Dulux" on the panels and one coat of "Dulux" colour on the cream paint work, was applied to Car No, 31 in Ballarat 15 months ago, and was proving very satisfactory although the car was in continual service. The preceding cutting-back process consists of washing the panels with steel wool and water.

Since the last conference, eight cars in Geelong had been refreshed by cutting back the green paintwork with "Dulux No, 2 Cutting Compound" and giving the cream paintwork one coat of cream "Dulux". This technique had considerably brightened the appearance of those trams, and they considered that it would extend the life of the paintwork by a further five years, Geelong had not had success with the use of clear varnish as a refresher coat, mainly because of the necessity to remove the refresher coat before subsequent repainting with 'Dulux' enamels. They queried whether other Branches considered it necessary to remove the 'Dulux' clear before repainting. (P. 10.)

Tramcar cleaning

REMARKS: Ballarat considered that the incidence of common colds among depot employees was unusually high, and because of this they had now commenced a system of disinfecting, although for many years disinfecting had not been carried out in that Branch. When a tramcar comes in for servicing, the doors are closed and the car is sprayed internally (back of seats, under seats, etc.) with "Eucopine" by means of a "Rega Atomiser." "Eucopine" costs 12/6d. per gallon, and 1/4 gallon is sufficient for five trams. At this stage, it was impossible to say whether or not it would be beneficial.

Geelong considered that the main objective of any disinfectant was to destroy vermin, though it was agreed that it had a psychological effect on the passengers. At present no regular disinfecting of tramcars takes place in that Branch.

The present practice in Bendigo is for the car cleaner on duty on Sunday mornings each week to spray the floors, seats and ceilings with neat "Formalin". This is done by means of a hand fly-spray and the saloon doors are closed for approximately six hours before the trams are put into service.

Geelong raised the point that "Formalin" is bad for asthma sufferers. There was also some doubt as to whether it would be effective in destroying vermin. Apart from this, it was agreed that "Formalin" is a very satisfactory disinfectant. It was decided that inquiries should be made from the Department of Health regarding these two queries, as it was definitely desirable that some form of disinfecting be carried out.

ACTION: Works Division to make inquiries from the Department of Health regarding the possible effect of "Formalin" on passengers suffering from asthma, and also regarding its effectiveness in destroying vermin. (P. 12-13)

ALTERATION TO MAXIMUM TRACTION TRAMS

Ballarat sought permission to alter their remaining three cars of the three-door type in the same way that Car No. 38 was altered at the time of its conversion for dual operation. On this car, the entrance to the centre section had been altered by removing some transverse seats and then, subsequently, the seats being changed from the transverse position to a longitudinal position. Ballarat considered that the alteration provided greater comfort and better accommodation for pushers, etc. and that the number of seats was still sufficient for requirements. The actual cost of this work was not known because of the amount of experimentation concerned with that car.

Geelong considered that it would cost £40 per car to convert from transverse to longitudinal seating, and that seating accommodation would be provided for 12. They had received a request from traffic personnel that this alteration be made, as the existing transverse seating in the car converted for dual operation made the conductor's work difficult. The Engineer and Manager had given his approval to their altering this car to longitudinal seating. At this stage, the expenditure for the remaining four cars hardly seemed warranted in Geelong. It was agreed that Ballarat and Bendigo should make the alteration to longitudinal seating in the remaining cars, but that Geelong would make no further alteration at present. (P. 28-29)

SPARE PARTS FOR MAXIMUM TRACTION TRAMS

Geelong suggested that one or more additional maximum traction tramcars should be purchased from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board and wrecked for spare parts, as they were holding insufficient replacement parts for such trams. This would overcome the problem of having trams out of service while breakdowns are repaired or preventative maintenance carried out. Geelong reported that they held only one spare motor, one spare set of wheels, and no spare radial castings nor spare controllers nor compressors, etc. Furthermore, it had been necessary during the past year to have patterns made and expensive castings purchased and machined when similar parts could have been obtained cheaply from a scrapped tram. In addition to truck parts, quite a number of parts from the bodies could be used on unrecoverable accidents. They could also be used on recoverable accident jobs by valuing them and debiting the particular chargeable job number.

There are ten maximum traction cars in Geelong, seven in Ballarat and six in Bendigo, and although there is a dearth of spare parts for these trams there has not been, as yet, an actual interruption to service because of breakdowns. However, it has been necessary at times for the depots to issue a single truck car in place of a maximum traction, and such a condition is viewed with disfavour by the traffic section.

Ballarat considered that a spare maximum traction car for scrapping would be useful, but they suggested that it could be used as a replacement for car No. 37 which was badly damaged in an accident, and the latter car could be wrecked for spare parts. Works Division, however, reported that the only car available for purchase from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board was a passenger car converted some years ago for the carriage of dogs to the Melbourne Coursing Grounds. Body fitments would not be suitable for use, although trucks and electrical equipment could be used as spares.

In view of the uncertainty of the future of the tramway system in Geelong, it was considered inadvisable to go to the expense of purchasing this car. (P. 28-29)