



HOW TO MAKE A BETTER W CLASS TRAM

Speed / safety

The safety of passengers is not at risk. Currently the W Class trams are limited to 40kph because of *driver* safety issues in the event of a collision with a truck or another tram. A 'crashworthiness' report of 2003 recommended strengthening and buffering modifications that would reduce the risk, and would allow them to operate at higher speeds.

Furthermore, possible routes such as Chapel Street, Victoria Street and Flinders Street are usually so choked with traffic and have so many stops that collisions at high speeds are not likely. In Victoria Parade they would not mix with road traffic. The route to St Kilda via South Melbourne is mainly on quiet residential streets with few heavy vehicles.

As part of upgrades, the operation of the doors was changed. They now close far more slowly, and the tram cannot move until they are fully shut, slowing down their operation. This could be modified but still remain safe if the doors closed a little faster, and opened faster as well.

Disabled access / platforms

While the W's are currently harder to board than the new low-floor trams, there are a number of possible solutions. Platforms are to be provided for many stops, and one at the standard height would leave only one step for access to W's. A driver assisted manual ramp could be used for wheelchair access at platforms.

The solution adopted in a number of US operations of heritage vehicles is a wheelchair lift within the vehicle, operated by the user. One has even been fitted to a W class tram for operation in Savannah, Georgia



Rebuilt trams in Philadelphia have platforms and disabled lifts

Noise

The W's are noisier than other trams when crossing joints in the track, and when crossing other tram lines. Dampeners inserted into the suspension and 'resilient' wheels (which have a rubber insert and are used on modern trams) would greatly decrease this noise.

Air Conditioning, Heating and power use

All W Class trams already have heating. Air conditioning could be added, but the amount of change to the roof line would be significant, and the windows would need to be sealed, and the trams would use significantly more power. Currently they use the least power of all the trams. A more 'green' solution would be to rely on simply opening the windows. Installing fans could also be explored.