

## **Brisbane's early tramway proposals**

### **by Noel West**

The first tangible evidence of tramway proposals for Brisbane occurred in August 1885 when the horse drawn trams of the Metropolitan Tramway and Investment Company commenced operation. However prior to that date there were several separate and serious proposals put forward to occupy many hours of debate within the halls of Local and Colonial Government. For various reasons none of them came to fruition yet each one had certain aspects that laid the groundwork for what was to come. This article has been prepared primarily from interesting items found while examining the pages of The Brisbane Courier (TBC) newspapers of the period.

The genesis for the first of these was brought about by the location of the terminus of the first railway into Brisbane i.e. Roma Street Station. The line from Ipswich was opened in two stages to either side of the river at Indooroopilly. Ipswich to Oxley Point opened on 4th January 1875 and Brisbane to Indooroopilly on 14th June 1875. Passengers used a ferry between the two sections while the rail bridge was being built. The opening of the bridge on 5th July 1876 meant Brisbane was then directly connected to Toowoomba, Dalby and Warwick with lines being extended on the Darling Downs and for several miles around Ipswich many coal mines were being developed. There was a desperate need to make a rail connection from Roma Street Station to wharves on the river to remove the costly transfer of goods using drays etc. The Government owned wharves at Queens Wharf and Petrie's Bight.

While not directly concerning a tramway for Brisbane, TBC reported on 15th July 1876 that a scheme had been laid before the Government by Mr. J.C. Wylie, C.E. projecting a system of light or cheap railways to act as feeders to the trunk lines. Of 3 feet 6 inch gauge on 30lbs per yard rail the lines would carry normal railway rolling stock except locomotives. No form of motive power was revealed but the lines would run along roadsides and would dispense with fencing, gates, crossings and stations. When going along streets in a town a different pattern of rail would be used so as to prevent the slightest possibility of any accident happening to either man, beast or vehicles. Nothing eventuated from the proposal but Mr. Wylie would be heard from again.

A lengthy article appeared in TBC of 26th May 1877 of a meeting of distinguished gentlemen at the Colonial Secretary's Office to discuss a means of connecting the railway to the wharves. One suggestion was for a line to the Queen's wharf and extending around the river to the Port Office and private wharves then to Petrie's Bight. Another suggestion was a tunnel direct to Petrie's Bight but little consideration was given to it due to the cost. A third was a line along Roma and Adelaide streets then down Creek-street to the old market reserve. That would be a tentative measure as a horse tramway at first and possibly worked by Merryweather (steam) engines afterwards and made useful for passenger and goods traffic.

In a report of the meeting of the Legislative Assembly on 20th October 1877 two prophetic formal motions appeared. The salient point Mr. Beattie moved was "an extension of the present terminus to deep water opposite Bulimba." Mr. Pettigrew's was similar saying "an extension from Oxley to South Brisbane." A Railway Commission was established to investigate the best way for the railway to reach deep water. TBC reported on 16th March 1878 at the last meeting Mr. Angus Mackay M.L.A. recommended a tramway leaving the present line somewhere near the gaol, traversing the North Quay, William-street, Alice-street (or the Botanical gardens),

and so down to the Port Office, thence round the wharves, and back to the terminus by way of Adelaide or Queen streets, and Albert and Roma streets. The scheme includes a branch to Queen's wharf or to coal shoots in the vicinity. Mr. Mackay had recently been the Commissioner to Philadelphia and presented a large amount of evidence regarding street tramways in various parts of the world.

Time passed and as no firm solution was forthcoming to address the railway extension problem Mr. Mackay again made the news as reported in TBC on 18th December 1879. "A definite proposal to lay down tram rails and run tramcars in the streets of Brisbane was submitted to his Worship the Mayor yesterday for the consideration of the Municipal Council. The proposal is accompanied by sketches and plans of the rails to be used, and also the interior and exterior views of the cars, and has been introduced by Mr. Mackay, M.L.A., and G.H. Royce, C.E., on behalf of the "The Brisbane Tramway and Railway Company." The company asks for permission in the first place, to lay down about three miles of line, from the junction of the Ipswich-road and Woolloongabba, via Stanley-street, Victoria Bridge, Queen-street, Wickham and Ann streets, to the Stratton-road, Fortitude Valley, with a loop or circular lines to the railway gate via Roma and George streets, and to the wharves via Eagle and Creek streets; and also for powers to construct and work tramways in any street within the Corporation limits where the prospects of traffic would justify the company to run cars."

The article continued saying that the cars were handsome and roomy and would be drawn by horses. The rails would be flush with the surface and have heavy longitudinal hardwood timbers laid beside the rails to offer a smooth and accessible roadway for other vehicles. The company would generously offer to pay for a third of the costs of maintaining the streets in which the rails were laid. That article galvanized another party into action for five days later TBC reported on the fortnightly meeting of the Municipal Council.

Under the heading of Correspondence appeared," from Mr. Angus Mackay, M.L.A., a proposal for laying down tram rails in the city: from Messrs. R.R. Dawbarn and J. Clarke Wylie, as follows:- "We purpose submitting for your consideration at the next meeting a concise proposal to construct a system of tramways within the city of Brisbane. Our scheme was made public on May, 1876, but no action was then taken, as the time was not considered ripe for such an undertaking: for which reason we have up to the present refrained from making a proposal officially to you. However, as this subject has been prominently brought before you from another quarter, we are induced to lay our projects before you. We trust, therefore, you will do us the honor to withhold your decision re this matter of granting concessions, &c, until our proposals reach you, which will be accompanied by elaborate detail drawings and most complete information." The council agreed to refer all correspondence on the matter to a committee of the whole council to be held the following Monday.

Interestingly in the article referred to above of 26th May 1877 the last paragraph stated," Mr. Douglas said that last year (1876) the Government had had an offer, from a gentleman quite competent to carry out the work, to construct a tramway that would carry railway trucks down Roma, Adelaide, and Creek streets, and connecting with the wharves, for £10,000. He thought the merchants of Brisbane could not do a better thing than undertake the work as a matter of speculation". While sounding similar to the 1876 report, it has not been ascertained just whether this was part of Wylie's previous proposal.

The council committee meeting was reported upon in TBC of 30th December 1879. The Town Clerk read the proposal from Mackay and Royce on behalf of a company stating that they purposed using horses and to work the tramcars for passenger traffic only. The mayor

introduced the proposal from Dawbarn and Wylie on behalf of a company, to be formed in the colony, and who would use steam-engines or motors on the streets, and would carry stone and other materials for the Corporation as well as freight for the public. They asked for the privilege of laying down a railway and working it for twenty-one years, at the end of which time the work could either be taken over by the Corporation on valuation, or the rails would be taken up.

Much discussion ensued and while there was no real objection to steam operation there was some concern about carrying freight through the streets. Alderman Pettigrew was concerned that the scheme might be too extensive and that the streets would be filled with steam with a train every five minutes. He thought horses could be used for a time at least and also mentioned a different system where cars were moved by an endless wire rope laid under the street powered by engines that would be stationary and out of the way. The committee resolved to seek wider information and expressions of interest from the press and public. On 1st January 1880 TBC printed a fairly detailed abstract of Dawbarn and Wylie's proposal under "The Brisbane Steam Tramway Company" as requested by the promoters.

"The general conditions of the proposal, which was made under the Local Government Act of 1878, were that a concession to construct tramways in the city should be granted to the company for a period of twenty-one years. The route of the proposed tramways was from the junction of Petrie-terrace with Countess-street (at or near the Normanby Hotel), and thence along Petrie-terrace crossing the railway bridge into Roma-street, along Roma-street to George-street, along George-street to Queen-street, along Queen-street to Wickham-street, Fortitude Valley, along Wickham-street to Brunswick-street, along Brunswick-street to Ann-street, thence along Ann-street to James-street: also from George-street at its junction with Queen-street over the Victoria Bridge to Stanley-street, and along Stanley-street as far as the Woollloongabba Hotel.

Branches from the main lines above enumerated to be laid down from the junction of Brunswick and Wickham streets, along Brunswick-street to Gregory-terrace, thence along Gregory-terrace to the National Association's grounds, also from the junction of Ann and Brunswick streets along the New Farm-road. A loop would likewise be provided from Queen-street, near the Custom House, along Eagle-street to Mary-street, also to Commercial wharf, from Queen-street. Crossing places would be provided as shown on the general plan, or as the Corporation engineer should direct.

The company would undertake, upon receiving twelve calendar months' notice from the council, to extend the line along any of the public streets within the city, which should possess a suitable gradient, and the traffic on which might reasonably be expected to yield a net profit to the company of £6 per centum per annum upon the cost of such extension. The company undertook to maintain and keep the space between the rails of every tramway to be laid, and an additional space of 3ft. on each side thereof, in good repair and condition, to the satisfaction of the City Engineer."

The article continued saying that the tramway would carry stone, &c, at half rates for the council for construction and maintenance of streets and discussed the options for the tramway at the expiration of twenty-one years. The report went on, "The total approximate length of tramway the company purposed laying down was five miles, representing a maintenance taken from the Corporation of six miles, or 35,200 superficial yards of street surface, or an annual saving to the city in maintenance of £900 per annum. The capital would be locally raised, thus keeping all profits in the colony. The abstract specifications which accompanied the plans set

forth that the gauge of the tramway would be 3ft. 6in.; the rails to be of iron 3½in. wide, with a groove of 1 ¼in.; the rails to be laid as near the centre of the streets as possible, and to be kept on a level with the surface. The necessary stations, sidings, and workshops would be erected so as to subserve the public convenience. It is proposed that the motive power should be steam, but a proviso is inserted to the effect that if the City Engineer reported that steam was dangerous or inconvenient, animal power only should be employed.

Both passengers and goods traffic would be carried subject to regulations to be hereafter made and provided. The rates to be charged as follow: For every passenger carried in ordinary trains, the sum of 3d, including 25lb. of luggage: for goods, 1s. 6d. per ton per mile: for parcels exceeding 7lb. but under 14lb., 4d. Over 14lb. and under 28lb., 6d.; over 28lb. and under 56lb., 8d. Carriages for passenger traffic would commence running not later than 7 a.m. and cease running not earlier than 8 p.m. The rate of speed of the carriages would in no case exceed ten miles an hour; through Queen-street the maximum speed would be four miles per hour, and all cars would go round corners at a walking pace. The motors used would be noiseless, smokeless, and free from any escape of steam, and the cars proposed to be used are those known as Stephenson's patent American cars."

TBC followed up on 7th January 1880 with a much shorter version but included some additional information. The line branching from Queen-street at the Custom's House was to go to the A.S.N. and other wharves in that direction and also through the Commercial and Government wharves to the Gas Works. It mentioned that one of the drawings shows through passing places, each of which is to be 200ft. in length with a clear distance of 11ft. from centre to centre of each line of rails. The article continued, "There are also two photos of the proposed rolling-stock - one a combined motor and car, called "The Baldwin," and the other a separate motor and car. The latter, open at the sides, and with curtains or green venetian blinds dropping from the edge of the roof, seems especially suitable to our climate. We understand it is proposed also to have cars fitted with circular stairs, and to carry both inside and outside passengers. The plans and drawings are very handsome specimens of the draftsman's skill, and we must say that the scheme of Messrs, Dawbarn and Wylie looks good on paper at least." On 12th January 1880 TBC printed a letter from Dawbarn and Wylie endeavoring to explain to readers the benefits of steam motors and the letter was accompanied by an extract from The Times, London extolling the virtue of Merryweather motors in Paris. The letter included, "We would add that your paragraphist's assumption that our scheme involves the employment of "30 horsepower steam engines" is erroneous, and shows that he is misled by over-earnestness in the cause of horsepower."

Well the die was cast and what followed in TBC on 15th January was a letter to the editor from Mr. Angus Mackay. The terms of the original proposal were slightly modified when he stated, "I had the honour of making a definite proposal for doing the work as proposed by gentlemen of means and experience in tramways. As might have been expected, the offer was limited, for very careful calculations were made concerning the amount of business that could be done in comparison with what the work would cost for construction and maintenance. The offer is to lay down in the best manner, as a commencement, three miles of rails, suitable for horse or steam power, and to work the same as similar tramways are worked in Liverpool, Birkenhead, Glasgow, and Adelaide. The first outlay in Brisbane would be £22,700."

He went on to say that the backers were ready to go but not out to make an immensely good thing of it. Then he poured cold water on the other proponents stating, "The idea of floating a company in Brisbane: a company to carry out a tramway upon a much more expensive scale than exists in London or Glasgow is - well, say very sanguine." "And, if tramways in Brisbane

await commencement until a company can be floated to form them, then is the date of commencement likely to be in the very distant future." "I but hope that the proposal, a most favourable one for Brisbane, will not be shunted off either through apathy, or that other danger to enterprise in the colony - the desire to screw the most out of those who are willing to make a commencement."

Naturally the other proponents fired off their own critiques in a letter to the editor on 19th January. They admonished Mackay for adding or steam power to their proposal and for inferring that he (Mackay) would gain nothing for his efforts in bringing the engineer Royce and the backers together. Dawbarn and Wylie went on, "Then we are told "the offer was limited." Well we coincide - the offer was very meagre and limited. The quid pro quo offered by Royce and Co. for an out-and-out and forever concession is simply preposterously limited." Regarding Mackay's skepticism on forming a company in Brisbane they added, "We question if Mr. Mackay can name a single instance where such an attempt "to form a tramway company" has been made in this colony during late years and failed. A tramway is one of those speculations commending itself as a payable investment to one or two Sydney capitalists, and does not need any forced special pleading on our part to prove that it must also be payable to a company locally formed, and whose personal interests, with attendant comforts, are entwined around it daily, thus ensuring its success."

The following day in a report of the Municipal Council under Correspondence some more information was revealed on the Mackay proposal. After noting the request to add steam power it went on, "Further, that the parties concerned are desirous of making the concession asked for terminable at such period after ten years as the Municipal Council may determine, upon the customary conditions, that due notice be given, and that the works be taken over upon valuation, as is usual in such cases. Estimate of first outlay, three miles permanent way, £12,500: ten cars, £2200: ten cars, £2000; two motors, £2000: horses, harness, buildings, &c, £4000; total £22,700. The gentlemen associated with the writer did not propose to float a company before going on with the works." How would they get away with that? The two lots of ten cars may have been for passengers and goods traffic.

The following day, 21st January, TBC carried another letter to the editor from Mr. Mackay under the heading of Proposed City Railroad for Brisbane. It is somewhat lengthy but worth recording in full. "The advent of "Dawbarn and Wylie" in connection with the city railroad system proposed to be commenced by me is one of those peculiarities of colonial life that somehow crop up when an effort is made in earnest to push on a public work. The enterprising partnership was never heard of until a commencement was proposed to be made. Then Mr. Wylie thought he saw something in it. He took steps at once. He made two proposals. The first was made to me, and is of a much more easily understood character than that proposed to the City Council. He tells me what he knows of companies, and suggests knowingly that if he should propose "more liberal terms" to the Corporation, the said liberality would have the effect of delaying the work proposed to be commenced. But he adds a willingness to be taken in as "a joint promoter," or that an "indemnity" to be paid to him. This cool proposal is signed "J Clarke Wylie." He was a stranger to me: but I heard of him today in connection with certain railway works in the central district. Of Mr. Dawbarn I know nothing, beyond the appearance of his name occasionally attached to racing notices.

The first, and to me peculiar, proposal of the enterprising Wylie was not of a character to induce further acquaintance with the writer. It might have drifted into the limbo of unnoticed correspondence, but was followed by the "liberal proposals" made to the Corporation to enable the partnership to float a company, and various letters to the Press. You will not be surprised

that I have never considered the said proposals as serious, or that they would delay the action of the City council. I have not met a soul who believes any such company as proposed would be floated. This being the case, there is no occasion for encroaching on your space or my wasting time bringing "Dawbarn and Wylie" into notice. Unwittingly I was the cause of their advent: that is sufficient infliction in all conscience. This is the first and the last notice wasted by me upon them, and would not be written but for their ill-conditioned letter in yesterday's Courier. In conclusion, let me say my interests and risks in the proposed city railway are strictly those of a shareholder. There are no considerations for promoters in the offer made, strange as such a state of things may appear to "Dawbarn and Wylie," nor do I believe there is more than fair business prospects for the money to be invested until the population of Brisbane is much larger than at present."

So it would appear that Mr. Mackay had washed his hands of having anything more to do with tramways but fate was to play another card. TBC reported again on a meeting of the Municipal Council on 21st February, 1880 to discuss tramways. A letter was read from Mr. J.C. Wylie withdrawing the proposals he had submitted to the council for a tramway, stating that Mr. Dawbarn would assume the responsibilities of the proposals made in their joint names. The Mayor thought that, as Dawbarn had made no proposals to the council, or assumed the responsibilities stated by Wylie the committee would have to consider their proposals as abandoned. So the council was left with Mackay and Royce's proposal. It was stated that a short Act would be necessary, but that if the council gave the permission asked, Messrs. Mackay and Royce and the gentlemen acting with them were prepared to go on with the work at once. The meeting was adjourned to seek legal opinion.

The demise of these proposals occurred with a brief entry in TBC on 8th April stating, "A discussion ensued on the tramway question, with reference to which the Mayor stated that the first step to be taken was to go to Parliament for an Act authorising their construction. Aldermen Heal, McMaster, and Taylor spoke against the proposed tramway scheme as premature and the discussion dropped."

On 23rd February 1881 TBC somewhat excitedly reported, "We learn with much satisfaction that the promoters of the proposed tramway from Woolloongabba, via Stanley-street, Victoria Bridge, Elizabeth-street, to Petrie's Bight, and by Ann-street to the Hamilton, are confident of the success of their scheme, and that circulars have been issued inviting a large number of influential gentlemen to attend a meeting to be held at the Chamber of Commerce on Friday next." The TBC printed a very lengthy report on 26th February of the meeting held in the Chamber of Commerce. A vast amount of space was consumed extolling the virtues of tramways, particularly steam, in various parts of the world and how publicly popular and financially rewarding they had become. Mr. R. D. Graham presented the majority of the proposal of which the most interesting follows.

"Now, to come to the special proposal of tramways for Brisbane, the first item is that of route. Public opinion has long since fixed the position of the primary line - namely, from Woolloongabba to the Valley, with secondary or branch lines following the lines of the principal bus traffic as an after extension; the only line proposed for simultaneous construction being a line from the present terminus of the Southern and Western Railway, along George-street to Queen-street, via Queen-street to Edward-street, via Edward-street to Mary-street wharves, Eagle-street to Queen-street. Besides the principal lines of city traffic, if the directory of the company considers it advisable, a system of light tramways will be extended into the suburban and country districts, especially to Beenleigh and Oxley on the one side, and the racecourse and powder magazine road on the other."

"In Queen-street, and from the railway station to and around the wharves, it is proposed to lay a sound and permanent way of transverse and cross sleepers on a foundation of concrete, and carrying a tram rail of 50lb. weight, the space between the rails and for a distance of 18in. outside each rail to be paved with 4in. cube setts. In the rest of the streets it is proposed to bed the sleepers in cement (sic) concrete trenches, the spaces being filled with macadam well laid; while the outside roads will be more simply laid in sleepers well bedded in macadam, cambered sufficiently to give depth for the wheel flange. Points and passing places will be provided where necessary, and it will have to be decided whether Queen-street, from the bridge to the Kangaroo Point ferry, should be double line, or the traffic eased by branches running through Elizabeth-street and the cross streets between Queen and Elizabeth streets. The total cost of the construction I estimate to be £25,100. The total distance proposed at present is 5½ miles, of which 1 ¾ mile will be laid in concrete and paved with setts, and 1 ¾ mile partly laid in concrete, and the remainder in macadam.

The lines are proposed to be worked in the following manner: - All trains are to run at a maximum speed of ten miles per hour, excepting in Queen-street and at all facing points and stopping places, where the speed will be reduced to four miles per hour. The trains will run at stated hours, stopping to take up and put down passengers whenever required. The through trains will run half-hourly, which with the railway-wharf line will be so timed as to give at first a train every quarter of an hour. Holidays and fete days will be met by special arrangements.

The fares are proposed to be at the rate of 1d. per mile; the whole distance being divided into stages, each represented by a ticket, which can be bought anywhere or sold and collected on board by the conductor. The rolling stock to accommodate this traffic will be five engines, ten cars to carry sixty each, and two trucks, valued at £7700."

Discussion followed with Hon. J. M. Thompson saying, "If in Brisbane any very strong opposition were offered to the use of steam, it would, he thought, be advisable to conciliate the objectors by employing horse-power, to which case the first cost would not be as great. The proposal before the meeting was for the good of everybody except the cabmen and 'bus proprietors, and a scheme that was for the good of the public generally could not be stopped because it was objectionable to a certain section whose object was simply to make money. He believed, however, that the 'busses would find plenty of employment as feeders to the tramway." Mr. Rea queried whether shopkeepers might object to a tramway past their door and Mr. Graham responded by saying that wherever tramways had been laid shopkeepers greatly benefitted. He went on to say that he had not proposed to carry the line down Elizabeth-street as such a plan would draw trade into that street to the detriment of those having business premises in Queen-street. The meeting concluded with the appointment of a provisional committee, including Angus Mackay, to take steps to prepare a prospectus.

Another report on 8th March covered a meeting of the Mayor and Aldermen with a deputation of the promoters of the projected Brisbane and Suburban Tramways Company. The main objective of the promoters was to seek a surety from the council that it had no objections to their scheme and how might be the best way to bring it about to the benefit of all parties. Some additions to the routes previously mentioned included a line from the Valley by Wickham or Ann-street towards the Hamilton, with branches towards Bowen Park, along Brunswick-street, and to New Farm along the same street. Up until now all the proponents had only seemed to have dealt with the Municipal Council. The Mayor had the foresight to convene with the chairmen of the surrounding Divisional boards that morning to discuss the issue. Apparently there was no objection from them provided the company did not attempt to ask for absolute control of their streets where the tramway was to run. The local bodies were of the opinion that

they should push for a bill through Parliament for the regulation of street tramways on their own account, so that they might be in a position to grant concessions to private companies.

After much discussion the general feeling of the meeting was that the time had now arrived when Brisbane should adopt the introduction of street tramways for the benefit of its citizens. There was even some expression that once an appropriate bill had been passed the Corporation itself might consider constructing a system. The promoters probably blanched at that. The meeting concluded with a motion that it reports to the next regular sitting that it is distinctly in favour of tramways, and wished the council to frame a bill, to get it passed by Parliament, to promote that object. The Mayor intended to table a notice of motion asking for power to incur the preliminary expenses of preparing a bill.

On 12th March 1881 a report appeared of a meeting of the provisional committee of the Tramway Company. "The deputation appointed to meet the Municipal Council did so, and ascertained that it is the intention of the Brisbane Corporation to draft a bill, and endeavour to get it passed through Parliament, empowering the council to construct and run street tramways in Brisbane, and that they shall have further powers to depute their rights to any other parties. Seeing that the decision of the Municipal Council may delay the formation of the proposed company to an indefinite period, the deputation recommends further consideration of the subject." There appeared very little the promoters could do from then on and after a long discussion, to keep their proposal simmering the meeting resolved, "That a letter be written to the Mayor, asking him to state upon what terms the Corporation will grant the proposed company a concession in the event of a bill being passed."

What seemed quite odd, considering the above report, was the item on 14th March. "We understand that Mr. John Cameron and Mr. R. D. Graham have, on behalf of the Tramway Committee, opened communication with the Government with a view to ascertain whether they will be prepared to introduce a general Tramway Bill during the next session of Parliament, such bill to give power to the various local authorities to make concessions to private persons undertaking the construction of tramways or railways through any street or road within their jurisdiction, and also to protect such persons from actions for compensation. We sincerely hope that the suggestion will be favourably entertained. A general bill is requisite because the Woolloongabba and Valley scheme embraces the jurisdiction of three authorities - the City Council and two Divisional Boards."

In response to the letter from the promoters, council replied in April, "to Mr. R. D. Graham, informing him that the council is not in a position to advise him of the conditions that might be imposed in the proposed Tramways Bill." Whether council thought the promoters were interfering or they just had a change of heart an item in TBC on 23rd November 1881 is pertinent. "The movement for the formation of a tramway company which took place here in the beginning of the year died away as soon as the Municipal Council assumed a position of partial hostility to it. The mayor, when announcing that he would oppose any attempt on the part of a private company to obtain powers under an independent Act of Parliament to construct and maintain a street tramway, promised that he would promote the passage of a general Tramway Bill through Parliament in the ensuing session. This he did not do so, and the project quietly dropped into oblivion." The Railway Department was also busy during 1881 in attempting to get extensions built to wharves on the Brisbane River. The decision to build a line from South Brisbane Junction (Corinda) to Woolloongabba had a protracted journey through Parliament and it wasn't until near year's end that approval was given. The line was to be finished in October 1882 but it wasn't completed until November 1883 and opened for traffic on 2nd June 1884. Slow progress was also occurring on an extension from Roma Street Station

to Petrie's Bight, however the extension was finally approved in October 1881 and an initial £11,000 had been allocated from treasury. The Chief Engineer submitted plans to the Municipal Council seeking to have the levels in Ann Street altered to permit a gradient of 1 in 25.

It will be realised that any street tramways to be constructed in Queensland could only occur under the authority of a Tramway Act. TBC reported on the 7th July 1882 that a Tramways Bill had been introduced the previous afternoon. After a turbulent ride through both houses the Tramways Act was assented to on 3th October 1882. That act did not apply to the likes of the Queensland Railways so in the meantime an interesting article appeared on 10th June 1882 titled A Tramway for Brisbane.

"In a few months the people of Brisbane and suburbs will have the advantage of a Government tramway from Roma-street terminus to Petrie's Bight via Ann-street. Already the roadway has been virtually commenced by the filling up of the hollow in Ann-street, at the rear of the Normal School. This work is being done under the supervision of the city engineer, although at the cost of the Government, and so much progress has already been made as to show the visitor that the gradients will be much less severe - the steepest being 1 in 25 - than anyone accustomed to Ann-street in its old form would have anticipated. Acting upon experience gained on the Sydney tramways, the Chief Engineer has determined not to put down grooved rails, but use ordinary railway rails of 41 1/4lb. to the yard, and form the groove by using inside or guard rails. These latter, with improved steam motors, have been ordered from England, and the tramcars are now being built by Messrs. Hudson Brothers, of Sydney.

The tramway will, however, be a railway capable of carrying the ordinary locomotives, trucks, and carriages, but guarded on each side in such a manner as not to interfere with the traffic of ordinary vehicles. The motor and tramcars will ordinarily be used, however, as more convenient than locomotives and trains for passenger traffic, and they will stop at the intersection of each street. At first it is only intended to provide for the suburban traffic, but, the accommodation once supplied, it is very unlikely that the public will submit to such a limitation. It may, we think, be taken for granted that the tramcars will meet every train, whether country or suburban, in which case they will not only prove a great convenience, but also stimulate the railway traffic." Three Kitson steam motors had been ordered in 1881 but only arrived in Brisbane in June 1883 following the six tramcars from Sydney. A description of the cars appeared in TBC of 9th April, "They are somewhat similar to the ordinary railway carriages, but much lighter. Each car is 31ft. in length, 6ft. 10in. wide, and 6ft. 2½in. high, with an additional height of 6in. in the centre. This is divided into five compartments, the seats being back to back across the car, and composed of battens similar to those used in some of the omnibuses. The car is entered from the side by sliding doors, a pair of which is placed on either side so as to afford access to each compartment. In addition to the inside accommodation there is a platform at either end of the car upon which an additional seat is placed, so that altogether there is accommodation for forty-eight passengers in each. The vehicles are glazed at both ends and sides, so that there is plenty of light inside, though the sliding doors, which are also half glazed, will probably rattle unpleasantly. Each car is provided with a set of vacuum brakes." It seems the report of the car's height is incorrect and a figure of 9ft. 2½in. would be more likely.

The motors were immediately considered unsuitable due to their narrow tyres however a partly assembled one was erected in June 1884, but a trial run with three tramcars to the Racecourse was deemed a failure. They were all eventually put into use but only on shunting duties spending various periods at Ipswich, Wooloongabba and Maryborough. They were classified as 6D1½ Motor and numbered 105-107 in 1889 but all were scrapped in 1902.

Acknowledging the arrival of the rolling-stock the writing was on the wall for the Government tramway as TBC on 6th July 1883 reported. "As already mentioned in our extracts from the Commissioner for Railways' Report, the plans have been agreed to, and the money voted for the tramway; but some modification of the route has been thought desirable, with a view of avoiding Roma-street, where the traffic is becoming very heavy. Amended plans to keep the line within Government lands until it crosses Albert-street and enters Ann-street, passing at the rear of the present Works offices, will probably be submitted to Parliament next session." Then on 14th July The Queenslander wrote, "The work will be delayed some months, as the crisis in Parliament will prevent the plans being approved before the end of this year or beginning of next."

Procrastination and ensuing events certainly killed off this tramway proposal. About the last reference to it was found in TQ of 22nd March 1884. "The project for running a tramway from the Brisbane terminus to Petrie's Bight remains in abeyance. In fact, now that a private company are to run a tramway down Queen-street and through Petrie's Bight, it is very doubtful whether the Government undertaking will be carried out, the more especially as in their case provision was made for working the line with steam motors, to which there is a strong objection in the public mind." So it wasn't until after that, that the decision was made to do something with the Kitson tram motors.

Returning to 1882 a small but interesting item appeared in TBC on 26th September, in anticipation of the Tramways Bill being passed. At a meeting of the Municipal Council a notice of motion was given by the mayor, "That it is an instruction to the Works Committee to bring up a report as to the advisability of this council constructing lines of tramway, in accordance with the provisions of the Tramway Act." Around the same time Brisbane had been paid a visit by a press-shy Dr. Weir, a representative from an American wire-rope tramway company, who made contacts with the Minister of Works and Railway officers. Apparently he was of the opinion that if a tramway was confined only to the Woolloongabba to Valley route then horse cars would be best, because the expense of the stationary engine and other appliances of the wire-rope system are so large that a considerable mileage is necessary to enable it to pay.

As previously mentioned the Tramways Act of 1882 was assented to on 3rd October. Copies of the Act were presented to the Municipal Council and Divisional Boards and as early as 6th October it was reported that the Woolloongabba Divisional Board had decided that it would be the constructing authority for any tramways within its jurisdiction. The Municipal Council called for its Works Committee to report on the matter and noted the decision of the Woolloongabba Board. The committee's decision was that the Corporation should be the constructing authority.

On 6th January 1883 TBC carried a report of the Municipal Council meeting in which the Works Committee report was read for the first time. The report read, "The Council having resolved to be the constructing authority of such tramways, your committee took into consideration the notice of motion asking them to bring up plans and estimate of probable cost of constructing lines of tramways.

Your committee recommended:-

1. That the first line for which the council apply to the Minister for an Order-in-Council to construct, should be approximately from the Woolloongabba Hotel to the intersection of the extension of Wickham-street with the Breakfast Creek-road, a distance of 3 miles 51 chains.

2. That a double line of rails be laid on the length of line within the city, and on that portion within the Woolloongabba Division.
3. That a single line of rails be laid on the Victoria bridge, and from near the city boundary to the terminus on the Breakfast Creek-road.
4. That the plans, sections, specification, book of reference, and estimate of cost herewith submitted be approved.
5. That a certified copy of such plans, sections, specification, book of reference, and estimate be deposited with the Minister and in the office of the Woolloongabba and Booroodabin Divisional Boards, as also at the Town Hall.

Point 6 said that such material should be open to inspection to ratepayers interested therein.

On 10th January 1883 TBC carried a long report on the Tramways Act, printing a variety of extracts from it, giving a brief summary of what the various sections contained, and on 23rd January two articles appeared on the proposal. The most interesting was of the special meeting of the Municipal Council to discuss the Works Committee's recommendations. Alderman Pettigrew was not in favour of steam, but for some kind of an air engine. He felt the proposed gauge of 4ft. 8½in. would not allow enough room for other vehicles in Queen-street.

Alderman Bale moved, "That the consideration of the question be postponed until after the municipal elections had taken place, in order that the ratepayers might express an opinion upon the matter." Alderman Payne seconded the motion but thought Stanley-street was too narrow and advocated a single line in Stanley-street and a single line in Grey-street for trams running in the opposite direction, He was also of the opinion that the tramway should be taken into Elizabeth-street after leaving the bridge and into Eagle-street. He believed a tramway in Queen-street would create far more accidents than at present. Alderman Thorne was in favour of steam over horses and believed that tramways would be the best paying undertaking the council could enter into. Aldermen Hocker and Graham opposed the tramway and Alderman Bale was not in favour of the council being the constructing power. The mayor was strongly in favour of the tramways and believed great revenue would accrue to the corporation and the proposed route would always pay.

So while the council decided to wait further discussion until after the forthcoming elections the other article was an editorial on the issue. The council's decision was applauded and already the paper was mentioning new routes to Gregory-terrace, Kelvin Grove or Enoggera, West End and New Farm. However there was concern of the problems that might occur if the city ratepayers bore the cost of lines into other divisions to their ratepayers' advantage. It was suggested that a united municipality for the purpose of providing the city and suburbs with tramway accommodation but realised that due to incompatibilities among the local bodies it would be impracticable and alluded tramways should be constructed by private enterprise.

The article finished with, "The annual elections are now so close that the delay involved in letting the matter rest will be brief, and the discussion of the question is calculated to excite beneficial interest in the various contests. A month ought now to settle the question one way or another, and if the ratepayers' opinion is found against the carrying out of the project by the council, we are satisfied that measures will at once be taken by the citizens to get the tramway undertaken by a joint stock company."

All council elections took place in February but as far as the Municipal Council was concerned there was difficulty in selecting a mayor and general council business was delayed for several weeks. While that was being sorted out a Mr. Edwin Smith from San Francisco addressed a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce on the subject of endless rope tramroads. The report of 17th March 1883 is very lengthy with most of it extolling the benefits of the system. He obviously had a chance to look into the latest proposals and put forth some ideas of what could be provided and costs. He said construction presented many difficulties and would be expensive approximating £12,000 per mile including road-bed, engine-house, and rolling stock.

In order to convince the meeting that a profit of 20 per cent per annum was possible he produced many calculations. The road being about 3 miles long, and as the cars travelled at 6 miles per hour, it would take a car or dummy about an hour for the round trip. With a dummy starting every five minutes twelve would be required besides having three spares. He thought it advisable to use dummies alone at first and add a car as traffic built up. A dummy could seat eighteen and could be worked by one man, who could also collect the fares. He was quoting a daily cost for twelve drivers, a fireman and engineer in the engine-house, superintendent, clerk, blacksmith, machinist and two labourers covering a period between 7 am and 10 pm and for interest and a reserve fund, of £40. One assumes the trams would be worked over two shifts.

To cover the daily costs he estimated, with a five minute service for the entire period, the twelve trams would make 360 trips per day and would require, at a fare of 3d, eight passengers per trip. However the trams could carry eighteen and by increasing the number of passengers the returns would be greatly augmented. He thought two engines of about 40-horse power, stationed somewhere near Petrie's Bight would be sufficient to work the system. Responding to a vote of thanks Mr. Smith said his only object was to place the subject before the citizens but he, as an architect and civil engineer, would be prepared to formulate a proper scheme if desired.

As the months of 1883 passed there was little progress and the Municipal Council seemed to be sitting on their hands and incapable of making a decision. However an item on 3rd November was the harbinger for the eventual construction of tramways in Brisbane. The Booroodabin Divisional Board had received a letter from the chairman of the Metropolitan Land Investment and Building Association advising that that organisation intended to apply for a constructing authority for a tramway and sought friendly co-operation with the board. On 1st December it was reported that the company had technically been wound up but had registered with the new title of the Metropolitan Tramway and Investment Company, Limited.

The report continued, "The scheme, we understand, includes a substantial double line from the Woolloongabba Hotel through Stanley and Queen Streets to the Valley, and thence to Breakfast Creek, with a branch on the one hand to New Farm and on the other to the Exhibition building. The cars are to be of the most approved design, and drawn by horses." "In another year, it is hoped, the transit conveniences of the city will have been beneficially revolutionised by the operations of the new company." It took until August 1885 but Brisbane finally got a tramway system.

Returning to the beginning of this article and the reason for the initial proposed tramways, i.e. for the railway to gain access to deep water, the progress of events took far longer than was desirable. As mentioned, a line from Corinda to Woolloongabba wharf did not open until June 1884 and that was only for coal traffic. In the late eighties the South Brisbane wharves were constructed but the line did not serve them until 1897. The previously desired access to deep

water "opposite Bulimba", i.e. the Newstead branch, was not realised until December 1897. Ironically by the time these railway to wharf connections were made in 1897 the pioneer horse tram system was then being converted to electric operation!

In addition to items from the digitised newspapers of the National Library of Australia other references sourced were:-

Locomotives in the Tropics Volume 1; By John Armstrong. ARHS - Queensland Division 1985

Destination South Brisbane. By John Kerr and John Armstrong. ARHS - Queensland Division 1978

Brunswick Street, Bowen Hills and Beyond. By John Kerr. ARHS - Queensland Division 1988

Triumph of Narrow Gauge. By John Kerr. Boolarong Publications 1990

The Brisbane Tramway Museum Society

ACN 009 793 604