

Road Congestion to Increase

"Australia is facing a looming transport crisis with highways and arterial roads set to be choked with thousands of extra cars, trucks, buses and motorcycles. In an alarming scenario after decades of under-investment, government research given to *The Sunday Age* suggests Australia's addiction to cars and trucks will soar in the absence of massive new investment to modernise transport networks. The report - which names three Victorian arterial roads as among the nations most congested - also highlights the need for a rethink on Australia's road-intensive freight transport system.

"The report by the federally funded Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics predicts Australians will be driving 55.8 billion kilometres a year on the non-urban part of the national road network by 2030 - 50% further than now, and a distance equivalent to 186 round trips to the sun. It follows growing concern about congestion in Melbourne after booming population growth. But the report's starkest warning is that the congestion problem will not be confined to big cities, but will affect the road networks feeding them, with Victoria's key arterial roads destined to be among the most choked. Research shows Victorians will be driving 10.3 billion kilometres a year, 60% more than now. Average daily traffic levels on the roads connecting Melbourne with regional centres will increase 57% by 2030. ...

"Transport Minister Anthony Albanese warned that state and federal governments and the private sector would need to invest heavily in alternative methods of transporting people and goods, including rail and coastal shipping. 'We've inherited a massive infrastructure deficit', he said. 'We need to encourage more people out of their cars and get more freight on to trains. A greater investment in rail will not only be crucial to tackling urban congestion, but also to reducing carbon emissions and lifting Australia's export performance'." **Ref: Josh Gordon & Reid Sexton, The Age, 8/3/09**

Comment: We agree with the Minister, he is saying the right things, but the reality is that billions are still being poured into road building, we are still building dysfunctional suburbs and almost no public transport - apart from rail freight - has been funded at the Federal level.

The Minister's own media release says as much. Note 'significantly increase the roads budget' against the 'willingness to invest Federal money in public transport infrastructure':

"The research vindicates our decision to significantly increase the roads budget. It also highlights the need to invest in the alternate ways of moving people and freight such as rail. We need to encourage more people out of their cars and get more freight onto trains. A greater investment in rail will not only be crucial to tackling urban congestion, but also to reducing carbon emissions and lifting Australia's export performance. That's why we've committed \$3.2 billion to improve the performance of rail and stated a willingness to invest Federal money in public transport infrastructure. We are planning for the nation's future transport needs."

Ref: Federal Ministerial Media Release, 9/3/09

"At all levels of government, Labor prefers polluting inefficient roads to public transport.



Walking to Work

Contrast the neglect of public transport with the \$6.2 billion allocated by the Federal Government to our foreign-owned car industry, which is already sacking workers as a thank-you." **Ref: George Finlay, The Age, 11/3/09**

Rail Gangs to be Congratulated

"Extensive work by V/line track and bridge gangs began within hours after one bridge was badly damaged and another destroyed south of Wandong in the fire storm of Saturday 7th February. Road coaches replaced all train services on the Seymour line with full train services resumed from Monday 16 February as works to repair fire damaged rail infrastructure neared completion. Some 1200 sleepers were replaced as well as two bridge decks near Wandong. The pits and the platform coping at the station needed reconstruction with the bridge works requiring installation of three prefabricated steel box sections to replace the former timber infrastructure. V/Line General Manager, Ursula McGinnes, said V/Line's rail workers worked tirelessly to bring the lines back to full operation. 'They have worked around the clock to minimize disruption to our Warrnambool, Seymour and Shepparton passengers', Ms McGinnes said." **Ref: OnTrack, 10/3/09 (Photo: V/Line)**



More on Government Spin

“Despite a 46% rise in trips on Melbourne’s trains in the past four years, the State Government will deliver just one new train this year. The contract for 18 new trains, signed last year with French train maker Alstom, has recently been posted on the Government’s contracts website. It shows that, despite Premier John Brumby’s repeated assurances that new trains are on their way, relief for commuters from severe overcrowding on the city’s trains won’t occur this year. ‘We have got a whole lot of new rolling stock coming online’, Mr Brumby said last week when questioned about overcrowding. But the new contracts with France’s Alstom, worth ... \$A335 million show the train manufacturer will deliver just one train by December 31. It will then deliver another 12 trains in the lead-up to the election in November 2010.

“Last year, the number of trips taken on trains, trams and buses increased by 11%. It is the first year the public transport network has experienced double-digit growth. Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu - who is yet to say what he would do to reduce overcrowding on Melbourne’s trains - said Mr Brumby had ‘clearly and deliberately misled Victorians’ over when new trains would arrive. Throughout the transport crisis in January, John Brumby told us that later this year new trains would be introduced’, Mr Baillieu said. ‘Once again, the Government has simply been feeding Victorians false hope to allay their anger’. Mr Baillieu said Labor had tried to deceive the public on when the new trains would arrive, and had neglected public transport for a decade.

“A spokesman for the Government, Michael Sinclair, said the Liberal Party had failed to provide any plan whatsoever for how it would meet the state’s transport needs. On top of the purchase of 18 new trains, the Government had taken up an option with Alstom to buy another 20 new trains after that, Mr Sinclair said.”

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 10/3/09

Meantime in NSW

“The [NSW] CityRail network has insufficient electric power to run the biggest order of new trains in Australia and has been forced to spend more than \$1 billion to fix the problem and to pay for other essential upgrades. The first of more than 600 rail carriages due to begin testing in October will be restricted to one section of the rail network until a program of capital improvements is completed, some of which are running years late and over budget.”

Ref: Linton Besser, SMH, 10/3/09

News Trains to be Built at Ballarat

“The Brumby Government has entered into a new agreement with Alstom to deliver 20 more new trains for Melbourne, with a major boost in local content to create at least 50 new jobs in Ballarat. Premier John Brumby said the Government had locked-in the purchase of 20 new six-carriage XTrapolis trains as part of a \$650m investment in the \$38bn Victorian Transport Plan to deliver new rolling stock. The purchase will create 50 extra jobs at the United Group’s Ballarat workshop. The first of the 38 XTrapolis trains will enter service from later this year and all be on the network by 2014. There are already 29 XTrapolis trains in the metropolitan fleet. The trains are already accredited by the independent safety regulator and are well integrated into the Melbourne network.”

Ref: FR Perry & Associates’ Newsletter, 11/3/09

Think Tram Now on TV

“Twelve new Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras have been installed around Melbourne’s metropolitan tram network as part of the Brumby Government’s Think Tram program. Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky said the new cameras built on the Government’s previous work to link the VicRoads and Yarra Trams control centres to provide enhanced traffic monitoring on key tram routes. ‘The Brumby Government is committed to improving the reliability of public transport and these new CCTV feeds will enable a rapid, more effective response to managing problems on the network’, Ms Kosky said. ... ‘These 12 cameras will provide real-time traffic flow information to VicRoads and Yarra Trams operational staff, with the aim of reducing tram delays around the CBD and inner suburbs. ... With more than 80 per cent of the tram network on roads shared with cars, increased coverage of the tram network means VicRoads and Yarra Trams can act quickly on potential traffic hazards that delay trams. We’re aiming for trams to flow better through our busy streets and provide a reliable service for up to 140 passengers on board each tram in peak times’.” **Media Release from the Victoria Minister for Public Transport, 3/2/09**

And Also ... (somewhere overseas – fail!)



Ref: www.shipmentofail.com

City of Sydney Cycling Strategy

"The City of Sydney Cycle Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2017 is Council's commitment to making cycling as attractive a choice of transport as walking or using public transport. The strategy outlines the infrastructure needed to ensure a safer and more comfortable cycling environment and the social initiatives that will encourage more people to cycle. It is based on a comprehensive analysis of cycling issues prepared by consultants for the City. Significant input was also received from the cycling community during its preparation. Significant changes were made in response to the submissions received during the public exhibition period in 2006 & the findings of social research undertaken by an independent research agency for the City of Sydney.

"Aims The City aims to make cycling an equal transport choice for residents, workers and visitors by 2017. Aims of the strategy are:

- creating and maintaining a comfortable and bicycle friendly environment in Sydney to encourage more residents, visitors and workers onto bicycles;
- improving cycling safety;
- promoting the benefits of cycling; and
- increasing the number of trips made by bicycle in Sydney.

"Targets

- Increase the number of bicycle trips made in the City of Sydney, as a percentage of total trips, from less than 2% in 2006 to 5% by 2011, and to 10% by 2016;
- Increase the number of bicycle trips between 2 and 20 km made in the City of Sydney, as a percentage of total trips to 20% by 2016;
- Achieve a minimum 80% good level of confidence and comfort for cyclists that ride in the City of Sydney by 2016; and
- Measure and monitor the number of collisions and injuries involving bicycles and achieve a reduction in the number of incidents.

"Key benefits provided through this plan are:

- reduced road costs;
- reduced overcrowding on public transport;
- lower greenhouse gas emissions;
- lower air pollution;
- reduced accidents; and,
- reduced health costs from increasing physical activity."

Ref: City of Sydney website

www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/AboutSydney/ParkingAndTransport/Cycling/CycleStrategyAndActionPlan.asp



Cars as a Fashion Accessory

"Recent spectacular falls in car sales remind us that a large portion of this market belongs to fashion, a deferrable expenditure in tough times. Engineering and aerodynamics have long been affectations beyond the utility required for a car grunting around the suburbs. Many Australians have collected these over-designed works of art as mementos of an era of excellence and excess. Among the many Mustangs and Monaros hidden away in the double fronted, double depth garages of our towns and suburbs there will be a growing number of recent euro cars that may become collector's items from the baroque era of over-engineering as image. It will probably never happen again.

"Meanwhile we continue to delude ourselves that cars are a viable form of transport into the 21st Century, detached motorists strip our public domain of interest and activity, and blank garages or exclusive resident parking schemes dominate our residential streets. Japan teaches us something of the future of cars. Blessed with a comprehensive metro rail system, few residents of Tokyo even think of cars as a useful form of transport. A prerequisite for owning a car in Japan is that it can be parked on the owner's land. Rather than allowing this to dominate the form of buildings and the edges of streets, small vehicles, even bicycles, are part of the entertainment value of streets, intimately docked into residential design solutions, part of the landscape, tamed and subdued like pets. Compare this to the growling beasts that dominate the form of Australian cities."

Ref: Bob Perry, The Flyer, March 2009

www.scapestrategy.com.au

More on Victoria Street, Melbourne

I have this vision to turn Victoria Street (from Carlton Gardens to Victoria Market) into a boulevard - with trams to provide the missing east-west public transport link - but with much reduced traffic. The whole idea is to link up to the proposed north-south rail tunnel. The idea is to run the north-south tunnel under Russell Street with connecting trams above. I know this makes a longer interchange connection with the existing station at Melbourne Central but it does have some advantages. It brings a better service (trams and trains) to the eastern part of the CBD, it means that the rail tunnel can be constructed without disruption to the existing Swanston Street trams, and it means that the trams have an alternative route which will help avoid major disruptions such as we saw again last week when the street was closed for the Moomba Parade.

Cars & Cities (Part 3)

“Though not mentioned in ‘The Power Broker’, Robert A. Caro’s biography of the master road builder Robert Moses, one of the more iconic clashes in the long war between the car and the city took place in New York, with Moses playing a role. He and other planners wanted to slice a highway through the middle of Washington Square Park, the heart of Greenwich Village. It is now hard to believe such a plan was ever seriously proposed, but in 1958 it came close to happening.

“At the time, photographed defiantly on the City Hall steps with a giant prop key to lock traffic out of the park, a Tammany Hall leader framed a question that was only then starting to be asked in earnest. Would we, he asked, ‘plan and develop our cities in accordance with the needs and wishes of the people who live in them or for the convenience of the vehicles which pass through them?’ The highway through the park was eventually scrapped, but in New York that question, until very recently, has been answered almost always in favour of the passing cars. From 1924 to 1965, car lanes into Manhattan grew from 68 to 120, according to one count, while the number of cars on the street went from 390,000 a day in 1946 (considered intolerable at the time) to more than a million by the end of the 1990’s. And that is not because travel has been made more efficient. In fact, it has often been the opposite. In 1907, with trolleys and traffic lanes, the Brooklyn Bridge carried 426,000 people a day; now, with space only for cars, it carries far less than half that number and is often jammed. Convoys of trucks rumble down the decaying streets of Chinatown on their way to New Jersey because tolls on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge would cost them an average of \$33 per trip to take the highways that are better designed for them.

“Many traffic experts see Bloomberg as the last, best chance - at least for the foreseeable future - for anything to change. When he was campaigning, he sought the advice of car sceptics like Kiley. Samuel I. Schwartz, an engineer who worked on East River bridge tolls under both Lindsay and Koch, wrote much of Bloomberg’s stridently anti-car campaign platform himself. And Schwartz, who coined the quintessential New York warning ‘Don’t Even THINK of Parking Here’, is no moderate on the issue. He advocates charging trucks \$50 for using Manhattan as a pass-through and, were it technically possible, \$25 a minute for people who want to cruise Fifth Avenue during the height of the holiday season. (‘They want to see

the Rock Centre Christmas tree from their car?’ he says. ‘If they do, they should pay for that great privilege.’) After his election, Bloomberg seemed to be moving in that direction. He decided, in the face of mounting attacks by powerful garage owners, to maintain most of an emergency traffic ban that Giuliani started after the Sept. 11 attacks, preventing single-occupant cars from crossing into much of Manhattan during the morning rush. He has ended the age-old tradition of free Sunday parking in many neighbourhoods (including his own, the Upper East Side) and banned turns on some busy crosstown streets - small changes but ones met with shrieks of protest. His transportation commissioner, Iris Weinshall, even went to London last summer to talk to Kiley and Livingstone about the congestion charge.

“But there seems to be a growing sense that Bloomberg could end up among the near-miss mayors on any kind of serious traffic reform. In large part, this is because he has already spent a career’s worth of political capital by raising property taxes to fix the city’s enormous budget gap, for example, and by banning smoking in bars, a move that would probably get Livingstone sacked in London. Bloomberg and his staff are so nervous about traffic issues that they do not like to talk about them even privately anymore. One city official told me of his particular nightmare: trying to write the speech that Bloomberg would deliver when he cut the ribbons on the new Brooklyn Bridge toll plaza: ‘What’s he going to say? “Ladies and gentlemen, these things that’ve been free for decades and decades. I’m the guy who’s going to make you pay for them! Thank you for your support!”’ Kiley says he still believes that Bloomberg could sell a congestion charge, especially in a city where so many take mass transit and only half of the people living at the epicentre of the problem even own cars. ‘That’s not a bad place to start’, he says, ‘when you know that half the people in Manhattan are going to be with you, almost by definition’. For all the rest, he adds, ‘Bloomberg could use the analogy of, well, look what a difference government has actually made to the subway system. Now we’ve got to take the next step because we have a subway that’s working better, a commuter rail system that’s in good shape and lots of room on buses. We’ve got to really start managing road use. That could be his message’.

“Would the message work? New York might not be ready to hear it yet and the messenger might be killed. But inevitably the city will have to listen, and the brave politician who forces it to come to its senses will be heralded as a visionary.”

Ref: Randy Kennedy, New York Times, 20/4/03