

Long & Winding Eco-Car Road

"The big carmakers presented a flurry of alternative driving concepts and eco-cars at the recent Geneva Motor Show, leaving many motorists wondering when such cars will reach the showroom. The next three years will bring a number of cars onto the roads that have so far only been seen as concept studies at big motor shows or circulated on the internet as teaser images. Yet much of what we have seen lately remains hype and may only appear on our roads 10 years from now. Carmakers are under enormous public and government pressure to build cleaner cars that are no longer dependent on fossil fuels." **Ref: The Age, 25/3/09**

More on the Nano

"There are plastic seat covers, a plastic dashboard and no air vents or air conditioning - in a country where summer temperatures can push the mercury to 50 degrees Celsius. ... slower speeds are likely to mean scorching temperatures inside - and uncomfortable, sticky backs for drivers and passengers - when the Nano hits India's notoriously traffic-choked streets from July." {See also #80}

Ref: AFP, The Canberra Times, 26/3/09

And Also ...

"After so much fanfare about the Victorian Transport Plan and the billion \$\$ investment, its hard to believe that the state government plans to add just one extra train in 2009. pt4me2 reckons we can't let the delivery of just one new train pass without recognition. So we thought we might ask the public to suggest a name for the train? Maybe Welcome Stranger, Hens Teeth, Lonesome Lorry,"

Ref: pt4me2 website <http://pt4me2.blogspot.com/>



Massive and expensive sign on Melbourne's Southern Cross Station (It's part of the spin)

Picture 23/3/09 {See also the item in #100}

NZ Government Stimulates Roads

"The National Government's newly announced plan to accelerate the building of new state highways while reducing the money spent on alternatives reveals a complete denial of the actual transport challenges faced by this country. 'The Government's intention to increase funding for state highway construction by \$1 billion while slashing funding for alternatives to roads — like public transport, walking, and cycling — will make New Zealand more oil dependent, increase our carbon emissions, and do nothing to solve chronic gridlock in our towns and cities', Green transport spokesperson Jeanette Fitzsimons said today. 'This is the way to solve our transport challenges from a blueprint dated from the 1950s'.

The additional money spent on new state highways will do little to stimulate jobs in our depressed economy. Recent job intensity studies reveal the high capital intensity of new roads infrastructure creating few jobs for the money invested. Improving public transport services, adding bus lanes, and improving the road surface are job-rich initiatives that would also increase the sustainability of our transport network. 'Our Government's plan for transport will tie New Zealanders to their cars. Freight will stay on large trucks on our already congested roads. We'll see very little mode shift to sustainable forms of transport while funding is reduced to pay for new state highways', said Ms Fitzsimons. 'The package also breaks an earlier promise from John Key that any infrastructure spending would include public transport. Last year, the Prime Minister promised a stimulus package that would "take into account...the need for public transport". This plan actually cuts funding for public transport'. ...

"Currently, one dollar is spent on public transport for every five dollars on roads. Under National, this ratio is likely to widen to \$1:\$7.

*"The cuts will also jeopardise any potential big gains from Auckland's rail electrification programme, Ms. Fitzsimons added. The Government is no longer guaranteeing funding for integrated ticketing or bus and train station upgrades. Fewer people will use the trains if they can't move conveniently from trains to other transport modes. 'Investing in more roads, rather than better public transport services, will increase our oil dependence, increase our carbon emissions, and ultimately employ fewer people over the recession. Not even a well-run business would plan a transport system to be this short-sighted'." **Ref: Jeanette Simmons, Green Party of Aotearoa NZ, Media Release, 16/3/09***

Problems in the Trucking Industry

"One person each week dies unnecessarily on the nation's roads because the federal government has not acted on the findings of its own inquiry into truck driver fatigue and safety, the Transport Workers Union (TWU) says. Union officials are in Canberra on Tuesday to raise concerns with the government over pressures truck drivers face when meeting 'client' deadlines. Frank, an owner-truck driver, told AAP that excessive pressures on drivers meant they did not have the time or money to be able to properly maintain their vehicles. 'That's the biggest problem ... and they try to do the maintenance themselves'. If drivers weren't making enough money, they would end up driving an extra few hours just to look after their family. The union's federal secretary Tony Sheldon says the government's inquiry recommended the need for sustainable pay rates. But the government still had not acted on any of the inquiry's findings, he said. 'Literally each week that legislation is waiting to be implemented another person is being killed unnecessarily horrifically', he said. 'Another loved one isn't going home to their families at the end of the shift'. He accused the nation's two biggest retailers - Woolworths and Coles - of being responsible for pay systems that drove 'economically, a dangerous industry'."

Ref: Simon Jenkins, *The Age*, 17/3/09

And Also ...

Nord Samuelson sent this in:
"Don't you think it is a bit ironic that Safeway (and others) have a promotion to give you fuel discounts when you buy groceries? Why don't they give discounts for public transport instead?"

And Also ...

"The capital raising for Bris-Connections is very much the famed 'Macquarie model' in action, with huge leverage involved. ... It was also a typical Macquarie model in another way — for putting together one of the worst-performing floats Australia has seen in decades, the investment bank picked up \$110 million in lucrative fees. ... [With the subsequent court case] there were so many lawyers that a company put together to solve a traffic jam in Brisbane had merely created one on the street outside Melbourne's old High Court building ..."

Ref: Mark Hawthorne, *The Age*, 28/3/09

{Key an eye on this BrisConnections story!}

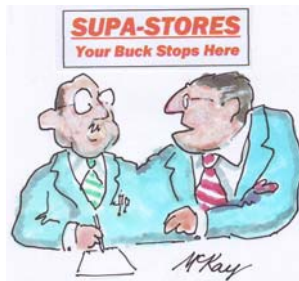
More on Melbourne's N-S Links

"My thoughts about a N-S City underground rail route were first sparked off by the 1940 J M Ashworth proposal for an underground line from Flinders St to North Fitzroy [ie, before the Inner Circle suburban rail service to North Carlton was terminated], published in the *TransIEAust* during 1940. My question was: 'why was the City Baths area on Swanston Street more important than the Victoria Market area on Elizabeth Street as the site for the northern City station? As we would see it now, Victoria Market is better as being not only quite suitable for this purpose, but also further away from Melbourne Central. J M Ashworth was a former VR Chief Civil Engineer who retired around 1939-40, and was apparently one who planned for the railways' future.

"Your pessimism about the probable slow implementation of Metro/suburban rail extensions is understandable. I would hope that, by the 2010 state government elections, this issue is so politically hot that for any government to ignore it would be political suicide.

"In fact, Melbourne's problem here is primarily a serious town planning rather than transport planning problem, though it is also a transport planning problem. It is now definitely time that we stopped gobbling up the valuable agricultural, forest, grass and rural land at our urban fringes for more residential land. Melbourne, with an overall average gross population density of 20,6 persons per hectare [per/ha][1 acre = 0,4 ha, one quarter acre = 1000 sq m] in the 18 municipalities within 20,9 km of the City centre, is a severely sprawled, transport-inefficient city.

"As far back as the 1929 report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission, it was held that this land area [1123 sq km] could readily accommodate six million people [at an average gross density of 53,4 per/ha]. At about that time [1936-37], the density of the City of St Kilda was 61,0 per/ha. By 1971 it had increased to 71,2, but by 1977 it had declined again to 62,5. As far as I know, the St Kilda area has never been considered a slum. In 1937, the corresponding gross population densities of Collingwood, Fitzroy, Richmond and South Melbourne were 65,2 82,2 68,5 and 46,5 per/ha respectively. Today's town planning 'wisdom' apparently considers a gross population density of from 50 to 100 per/ha as suitable for a transport-efficient city [without undue over-crowding]." Ref : Louis Fouvy, 19/3/09



'Public transport's keen now. They'll copy the servos' lurk of getting customers to fritter their discount savings on crisps and candy.'

Cars and Congestion (Part 2)

“Congestion is more intractable. In theory, better public transport systems, toll schemes, restrictions on registration permits and, where feasible, new flyovers and underpasses can all help to ease urban gridlock. Developing countries with cheap labour should also be able to find the resources to build plenty of new roads outside the towns. India, for instance, is in desperate need of better highways connecting big urban centres. The ‘expressway’ that links Mumbai with Pune, an industrial city with a population of 6m, runs straight through crowded villages, with traffic sometimes slowing to walking speed. About 40% of India’s road traffic is carried on just 2% of its roads, most of which leave much to be desired. As Ravi Kant of Tata Motors puts it: ‘India doesn’t need fewer cars; it does need more roads’.

“What makes infrastructure investments in developing countries tricky is politics. Even in China, where agricultural land has been ruthlessly acquired for new roads, opposition is growing. In democracies the obstacles are even greater. Mr Kant says that in the five decades after independence India built almost no new roads. That changed when the pro-business Bharatiya Janata Party came to office in 1999. But since a Congress-led coalition took over in 2004, road-building has dropped off again.

“Yet infrastructure problems are dwarfed by the likely effect of a huge increase in the worldwide number of cars on climate-changing carbon emissions and future oil prices. Research shows that \$5,000 a year is the earnings threshold at which car-ownership takes off. On that basis, economists at the IMF have calculated that the number of cars worldwide will grow from 600m in 2005 to 2.9 billion in 2050. By 2030, they believe, China’s car fleet will have overtaken America’s (which itself will have increased by 60%), and by 2050 China will have almost as many cars as the entire world has today. India will be catching up fast, with a fleet of 367m, 45 times the number on its congested roads today.

“Those cars will pump an immense quantity of greenhouse gases into the earth’s atmosphere. According to the 2006 Stern Review on the economics of climate change, in 2000 cars were responsible for 6.3% of global CO2 emissions. If car emissions were to grow in line with ownership, by 2050 they would raise total world emissions so much that scientists believe temperatures would rise by an alarming 3°C from pre-industrial levels. In practice, it is inconceivable that car emissions will increase at

this sort of pace. For one thing, the growth in the world’s car fleet will put unremitting upward pressure on the price of petrol and diesel. Even though oil prices have more than halved since their mid-year peak of \$150 a barrel, no carmaker is willing to bet that they will not rise again when the global economy recovers.

“Luckily for the car manufacturers, although higher fuel prices can make a difference to what kind of cars people buy and how much they use them, they do not dissuade them from buying cars altogether. Taxes on fuel at the pump in Britain and Germany are more than six times those in America, but levels of car ownership are only slightly lower - and might be similar if public transport in Europe were as bad and commuting distances as long as they are on the other side of the Atlantic.

“For all the problems they bring, cars also confer large social and economic benefits. As the IMF economists note, ‘mass car ownership has historically been an integral component of the transition to an advanced economy. Workers can cover longer distances in their daily commutes, effectively increasing the size of the labour market and facilitating specialisation in production; consumers can purchase goods from shops farther from their homes, which results in greater competition in the retail sector; remote fishing villages can develop as tourist resorts with (mostly) positive effects on incomes and welfare; and so on’. And at a more emotional level, most people simply like cars, even if the environmentalists disapprove. But if that yearning is to be satisfied without destroying the planet, the cars themselves will have to change a great deal. Mr Ghosn of Renault-Nissan reckons that the industry has to develop vehicles with very low or zero emissions as quickly as resources and technology will allow.”

Ref: The Economist, 13/11/08

A Reader’s Response

“Even if every one of them ran completely on clean, renewable energy I would find the prospect of 3bn cars on the planet terrifying. The cost to the planet of car production is not just in their use but their manufacture, as each unit produced requires a huge amount of energy, metals and, perhaps most importantly, water. And then there are the social costs. Cars kill more than 90,000 people a year in India alone - what will this figure be when there are 45 times as many cars on the road, as you predict? This is to say nothing of the atomisation of society, the decrease in serendipitous contact with people from different backgrounds that is necessary for social cohesion.

"You say that 'at a more emotional level, most people simply like cars'. Many people in Seoul would disagree. There, Mayor Lee Myung-bak turned a motorway running through the heart of the city into a canal and public green space which pedestrians, amblers, cyclists and flaneurs could use. The citizenry liked it so much they elected him President of South Korea.

"You also display a basic lack of knowledge about urban planning by towing the line that more roads means less traffic congestion. All the evidence shows that more road building is only a temporary fix for traffic jams, and ultimately only encourages more car ownership and use.

"Instead of crossing its fingers and hoping for electric cars recharged by renewable power stations, the Economist should be arguing more strongly for green taxes - in both developing and developed countries - to fund more and better public transport."

Ref: N J Maryes, The Economist, 16/11/08

Problems with Motor Emissions

"Motor emissions pollute the air we breathe in many ways, putting hazardous gases and solid matter into the environment. Besides global warming agents (discussed below), emissions pose more immediate health risks from toxic compounds, particulate matter, and ozone and its precursors.

"Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas resulting from incomplete combustion, most commonly noted as a serious risk from home heaters. Besides the risk in enclosed spaces, CO also reacts with sunlight to produce ozone (see below) and contribute to smog. The main source of CO is exhaust from road vehicles, accounting for just over half of all CO emissions in the U.S. (87% from passenger vehicles)—nearly double that of all other transportation modes combined - and up to 95 percent of CO in cities.

"Ozone Precursors are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and other hydrocarbons. They usually result from incomplete combustion and fuel evaporation. In 2002, road vehicles accounted for 21% of hydrocarbon emissions in New England, with passenger vehicles contributing the vast majority.

"Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) result from high temperature fuel combustion, and react with sunlight to produce smog and ground-level ozone, as well as contributing to the formation of harmful particulates. Road traffic accounts for



more than a third of all NOx production. As of 1999, gasoline vehicles contributed just over half of this, while diesel road vehicles contributed 42%.

"Particulate Matter (PM) consists of tiny bits of easily-inhaled solid material. Motor traffic pumps huge volumes of harmful particulates into the air that all people and animals must breathe. Numerous health risks, including life-threatening diseases, are linked to PM, especially 'fine' PM (particles 2.5 microns and smaller), which can lodge in lung tissues or even pass directly into the bloodstream. Besides direct health risks from inhalation, PM can have extended health, environmental, and aesthetic effects. Particles carried by wind can settle on water and food sources, which can impact coastal waters, soil nutrients, farms and forests, and ecological diversity. PM can also reduce visibility, and deface or damage historical structures and other property.

"Ozone (O3) is a highly reactive form of oxygen, produced by a reaction of sunlight with hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides (NOx). In the upper atmosphere, ozone is vital to limiting harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation. But at ground level, ozone reacts with living tissues, causing irritation and acute health problems. It is especially bad for those with asthma and other chronic lung problems, and prolonged exposure can lead to serious chronic illnesses and premature death. Ozone usually peaks in summertime due to higher temperatures, longer days, and more direct sunlight. It may reach unhealthy limits, triggering 'ozone days' when urgent health bulletins are distributed asking the public to reduce activity, try to stay indoors, and avoid driving. In Rhode Island, regular bus service is provided free on ozone days, to discourage driving & strenuous activity. ...

"Driving, and even parking, threatens our waters in several ways. Surface runoff distributes toxins in ways difficult to trace and mitigate. Coastal oil spills can be major environmental catastrophes."

Ref: Tom Sgouros & Wesli Dymoke, A Fare Choice: How Rhode Island Can Invest in Public Transit and Energy Independence, Sierra Club
For full report & references see:

www.ri.sierraclub.org/farechoice.pdf

And Also ...

Several astute readers noted a discrepancy in the article on Social Research on Cycling {#103} which was picked up from the City of Sydney website... <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/AboutSydney/ParkingAndTransport/Cycling/SocialResearchCycling.asp> : "The key findings of the research were as follows: ... 40% of current cyclists are male, only 13% are female."