

More Urban Sprawl

"Melbourne's urban sprawl will push another 50,000 houses into surrounding farmland in the next 15 years, putting further pressure on Melbourne's stretched transport system. Despite Government planning policies backing increased city density, almost half of all new housing expected in Melbourne over the next decade will be built on Melbourne's fringes where there is little access to public transport. A report by the Government's urban development program estimated that 'an average of around 13,300 lots are required annually to meet projected dwelling demand across the growth areas over the next 15 years'.

"The report found current land zoned for housing was not adequate for the expected demand. 'The 2008 urban development program has identified that there is approximately 10-11 years' total supply of broad-hectare land (set aside) across metropolitan Melbourne growth areas, which constitutes a current shortfall of residential land for future requirements', the report said. Government policy is to have 15 years of land available for housing. The report indicated that at least 50,000 houses would be built outside Melbourne's current boundary in the next 15 years. Greens MP Colleen Hartland said: 'There is already a huge strain; the Government is simply not putting money into public transport, they are letting those outer growth suburbs be built without any public transport'."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 9/5/09

Rail Extension Proposal

"The dual railway line to Flemington Racecourse and Royal Melbourne Showgrounds is being wasted and should be extended three kilometres to a planned new suburb on the Maribyrnong River, a former lord mayor says. Kevin Chamberlain said extending the line would allow it to service 3000 homes planned for the suburb and the Highpoint Shopping Centre, potentially taking thousands of cars off inner-city streets.... Last month, Premier John Brumby announced plans to build a new suburb on the 128-hectare former Department of Defence explosives factory site next to the shopping centre. ... New stations could be situated at Victoria University and the shopping centre, and the line could be extended to East Keilor. A rail link would improve the value of the Government-owned housing site at Maribyrnong. 'They would actually earn more money out of the development', [Mr Chamberlain] said. The suburb is expected to be built in 10 years."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 18/5/09

Light Rail Developments in Sydney

"In the first sign that the Rees Government is looking for immediate solutions to inner Sydney's congestion crisis, the Transport Minister, David Campbell, today will take a proposal to extend the light rail line to a key cabinet committee. The low-cost proposal would extend the line from Lilyfield through Leichhardt, Haberfield and Summer Hill to Dulwich Hill railway station. It would link the light rail to the inner-west and Bankstown lines could be running within a year and cost less than \$70 million. By contrast, the planned seven-kilometre underground metro train link between Central and Rozelle has been costed at \$5.3 billion. ...

"The resignation on Friday of the director-general of the Ministry of Transport, Jim Glasson, is believed to have removed an obstacle to the light rail extension. It could also increase the Government's chances of retaining the seat of Balmain, held by the Education Minister, Verity Firth, who will face a serious challenge from the Greens at the election in 2011. Two weeks ago, the Premier, Nathan Rees, spent more than an hour with the Lord Mayor, of Sydney, Clover Moore, as she and the city's transport consultant, Peter Twiney, laid out plans for a light rail loop. ... Councillor Moore wants to build a light rail loop through the central business district, and extend the existing light rail along Sussex Street to the planned Barangaroo development. She has also suggested a light rail link to the big sporting precinct at Moore Park and the planned town centre at Green Square. A city loop would cost an estimated \$180 million - a fraction of the cost of the underground metro train - but would require the removal of car lanes."

Ref: Andrew West, SMH, 25/5/09

Comment: Could it be that investment in public transport would be popular with the electorate? Oh, and this proposed Sydney loop reminds me that before the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, I was suggesting as a 'legacy' project the linking of North Melbourne and Richmond railway stations by a tram loop incorporating South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Docklands and Fitzroy. I'm not sure what legacy projects the Games left? Even those fish disappeared.

And Also ...



Ref:
www.funny.co.uk

Calculating Car Ownership

"Ask someone how much it costs them to run their vehicle and the first thing they'll think of is the weekly petrol bill. After all, that is the one expense they have to dip into their pocket for every week. But petrol bills are only one part of the car ownership equation. In fact, your fuel bill usually accounts for just 20 per cent of your total operating costs, depending on the car you drive. Every year you have to pay registration and insurance, get the car serviced and pay for consumables such as oil, filters and tyres, not to mention any repair bills. As with the weekly petrol bill, these expenses spring to mind fairly readily because they chew up cash we invariably don't have. But as with the fuel bills, these only add up to about 20 per cent of the total cost of owning a car. By far the biggest cost is depreciation. The old story of your car dropping thousands of dollars in value when you drive it off the showroom floor is unfortunately pretty accurate. Over a five-year ownership period, depreciation on your average Commodore or Falcon can make up nearly half your total costs. The last expense is what the motoring groups call 'opportunity cost'. It's a fairly complicated concept but it basically takes into account the interest you could have made from the money you've lost on your car through depreciation. In some cases it can make up as much as 15 per cent of your total costs. But wait, there's more. The common calculations about ownership costs do not take into account the cost of interest on any loan you may have taken out to buy the car. When you add up all the costs of owning a car, public transport can look pretty tempting."

Ref: Richard Blackburn, The Age, 8/5/09

Feedback "I think that the high increase in train passengers [in Victoria] is a lot to do with getting rid of Zone 3. Unfortunately the Govt is very slow in keeping up with demand. The privatisation cannot be that bad with the increase. We are now getting two extra trains an hour to Ringwood, and many are full. I think extending the evening service should be increased. How many people take the car because they may work late at work? I think trams have gone up by 7% in the last few years and the frequent routes are well patronised. I'm sure it would be better if there were more trains and trams. ... We had a lot of support from traders in the city with the [tram] platform stops, despite a noisy minority. The more likelihood of it generating [customer] traffic near their doors the happier they were, however, further out, with less frequent PT it may be an issue."

Ref: Name Supplied, 26/5/09

Obama Car Targets

"Green groups say Australia's voluntary vehicle fuel-efficiency targets do not go far enough and are calling on the Government to follow a tough new scheme announced by US President Barack Obama. The United States has embarked upon its first comprehensive effort to curb greenhouse gas emissions from cars, while also reducing the country's reliance on foreign oil. Under the new rules, American cars and trucks will have to get 15 kilometres per litre by 2016. At the moment they average 10 kilometres per litre. Emissions from all vehicles will have to be cut by 30 per cent, the first attempt by the US to introduce a national limit on any greenhouse gases. At present all new cars in Australia must be sold with a sticker on the windscreen showing the fuel economy and the carbon dioxide emissions. ...

"Mr [Steve] Campbell [of Greenpeace Australia] says he does not buy the argument that introducing tougher standards will mean consumers have to pay more. 'That's not necessarily the case. It doesn't necessarily follow that if a car is more fuel-efficient that they pay more', he said. 'More fuel-efficient cars can be smaller, they can be made of lighter materials, so in fact it can be a win-win situation. And then of course you're paying less for your fuel to drive the same distance. There's really no problem'."

Ref: Barbara Miller, ABC News, 20/5/09

Commute Misery

"People with the longest commute have the lowest work/life satisfaction, studies show. The average Australian commute is 56 minutes a day. ... Almost three in four workers commute for five hours or less a week, the Australian Work and Life Index reveals. ... Of those commuting for more than ten hours a week, one in four say work interferes often or almost always with their life. When



commuting and working hours combine to create long days, the effects on work/life satisfaction are very destructive, the survey of 1435 Australians found." Ref: MX 19/5/09

'Remember when it was kph - not hpk !'

New York Traffic Calming

“Janette Sadik-Khan, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), spoke via video, on the remarkable improvements which have been made to New York’s streets. New Yorkers have one third of the carbon footprint of an average American, so as Sadik-Khan pointed out, if you want to do the planet a favour, move to New York City. Commuting by bicycle has already been increased by 35% between 2007 and 2008. DOT has a program for quickly and cheaply transforming streets, moving away from car-domination to ‘complete streets’.”



Times Square – Before and After



“The improvements involve closing lanes to car traffic, painting the street and adding landscaping, and reopening the street to cycle and pedestrian traffic, all within a few weeks. Although further improvements will be undertaken, the rapid change allows people to start using the space, and see the changes as they are being made. The program has been so successful, further works are planned for Broadway Boulevard, such as the pedestrianisation of Times Square, as illustrated.”

Ref: Claire Porgand, The Flyer, April 2009
<http://www.scapestrategy.com.au/> More Info:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml>
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml>

Street Parking & Traders (Part 3)

“Streets constitute a major component of public space in the city. Planning and designing great streets is a complex process which involves many proponents and various challenges: limited budgets, competing priorities for space, fear of economic losses by merchants, and political opposition. It is important to study the issues thoroughly so that decisions are based on the best possible information, reflect the greatest public good, and achieve goals that all or most stakeholders can support.”

“This study set out to analyse the constraints and opportunities, including the economic impact of removing one lane of on - street parking, for installing a bike lane on Bloor Street through the Annex neighbourhood, [in Toronto]. Based on the data, analysis and discussion, the evidence makes a strong case that Toronto should be looking to install a bike lane on this section of Bloor Street. The spending habits of cyclists, their relatively high mode share, and the minimal impact on parking all demonstrate that merchants in this area are unlikely to be negatively affected by reallocating on - street parking space to a bike lane. On the contrary, this change will likely increase commercial activity.”

“The general finding from this study is that pedestrians, cyclists and transit users account for the bulk of retail spending on Bloor Street West in the Annex neighbourhood. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that efforts to attract more pedestrians and cyclists will have a more positive economic impact on businesses than maintaining the existing parking on the street. On this section of Bloor Street, the existing parking demand can be accommodated by a reduced number of on - street parking spaces combined with the existing off - street parking spaces. It is clear that many merchants in the study area do not view on - street parking as key to their business”

“This study has developed a sound research protocol for understanding this important issue. This type of study should be replicated on other commercial streets where there is concern about reducing parking to accommodate wider sidewalks or bicycle lanes. However, not every City project will require this level of analysis, and policy makers should be wary of resting the full decision process on this type of study. This is just one of a number of study tools and should be weighed against other information available to planners.”

Ref: Fred Sztabinski, Bike Lanes, On-Street Parking and Business, Feb 2009 Full report:
www.cleanairpartnership.org/pdf/bike-lanes-parking.pdf

Public Transport Can Compete - Part 2

"The general up-swing in public transport patronage has been ascribed to all sorts of reasons, but chief among them are peak oil and people's concerns about climate change. For much of last year transport conferences around Australia were being shown graphs that had projected oil prices for the coming years trending upwards on the same trajectory as the past three years. Delegates were constantly told that we would never see prices fall below \$US100 per barrel again. When prices fell below \$US50 per barrel in November 2008, there had to be some dramatic reworking of Power Point slides. Of course, nobody can yet predict how long lower petrol prices will last, or what impact they will have on public transport patronage."

"In Melbourne (until this summer's heat and wildcat union actions contributed to major rail disruption) the main problem has been overcrowding on certain services. Naturally, this means that systems need more rolling stock and certain infrastructure upgrades. ...

"A further problem for public transport is that it is subject to constant proposals from politicians, and other interest groups that would make it even less commercial. What is surprising is that many of these ideas are floated by what might be considered the political right - the Liberal Party and employers. At the last Victorian state election the Liberal Party had a policy of making public transport free to all students, while in the past some Liberals have speculated about making the whole system free. The willingness of people to pay fares is the best indicator that operators and government will have that the service is meeting the community's needs. The business of delivering public transport needs more market signals, not fewer. The fact that peak-hour overcrowding is currently the biggest problem facing many public transport services only serves to highlight that 'free' travel would actually create problems.

"Then there are the costs imposed on rail rolling stock by state government preferences for local industry. The Victorian Government recently announced a new 'Building our Industries for the Future' policy, boasting that rail rolling stock would be the first project to fall under the policy's umbrella with the 'aim to achieve a minimum of 40 per cent local content on rail rolling stock on a whole-of-life basis.' Employer bodies were among the most enthusiastic callers for such policies apparently. Shortly before the announcement, Australian Industry Group Victorian Director, Tim Piper, had condemned

both the Victorian and New South Wales Governments for having placed large rolling stock orders overseas. Piper commended Queensland and Western Australia for having more protectionist policies. Employers apparently do not care that the extra price that has to be paid by not choosing the best bid is paid by the taxpayers or commuters of the state concerned.

"For decades, rather than being run as a business, public transport has been regarded as a means of providing jobs for its employees, satisfying the protectionist demands of employers, as a portfolio for political gimmicks, or as an offshoot of the environment department. It has also suffered from the inability to commercially develop its property, or conduct efficient maintenance, due to local residents using planning processes to stifle activity. All these impositions just make it harder for public transport to compete with the private car. Efficient private operators of trains, trams, buses and ferries need to be given more scope to compete on their merits."

Ref: Richard Allsop, IPA Review, March 2009

Richard is a Research Fellow with the Institute of Public Affairs.

Comment: These extracts are printed because it is important to hear what organisations like the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) are saying about transport.

Traffic Impeding Trams

"Weekend trams services are grinding to a halt around Melbourne's popular shopping strips. Yarra Trams says there should be more priority given to trams, and better public transport generally. The RACV says weekend traffic problems would be eased if there was improved public transport. Weekend tram services struggle to get through popular shopping areas in Brunswick, Camberwell, Fitzroy and Richmond. Better weekend bus services in the suburbs have seen patronage on some routes soar by as much as 40 per cent in one year. Yarra Trams said its services were being delayed on weekends by traffic congestion in Melbourne's popular shopping strips. The operator wants more priority given to its trams, a move likely to attract opposition from local traders who fear their customers will go elsewhere. Setting aside space for trams would usually mean the loss of on-street parking. But Yarra Trams chief executive Dennis Cliche said better tram services would be better for business."

Ref: FR Perry & Associates Newsletter 11/5/09

And Also ...

"In Illinois, the law is that a car must be driven with the steering wheel." Ref: www.strangefacts.com