

Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary

"The population pressures confronting Melbourne's planners cannot be denied: another 1.8 million people are predicted to be living in the city and its suburbs by 2036, which is almost double the number on which the original 2030 projections were based. Dealing with this problem by simply pushing the boundary out further and gobbling up the green wedges cannot, however, be credibly explained as yet another revision of the basic plan. The intent of the plan was to place a limit on the physical growth of the metropolitan area, thereby also constraining the cost that future generations of taxpayers will bear in providing infrastructure and community services for a city that is already massively sprawled. With a boundary so rubbery and a planning minister so keen to 'call in' development decisions, the intent appears to have vanished. The means to the end of confining Melbourne within a liveable boundary was supposed to have been the encouragement of medium and high-density housing along the growth corridors and around suburban transport hubs. And it was this aspect of 2030 that the plan's critics always predicted would bring it to grief. Nothing, they said, would wean Australians off their love of cars and traditional suburban housing. Property developers sang along in chorus, and the Government has evidently decided that it agrees."

Ref: Editorial, *The Age*, 9/6/09

Cycling Heaven, Not!

"Melbourne, it has often been pointed out, acquired its reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities almost entirely because of its built environment. This city has no great natural endowment shaping its design, like Sydney's harbour. It is basically low-lying, river-plain country. Yet that is one respect in which nature's gift and human design could mesh perfectly, for the flatness of the terrain should make Melbourne one of the world's great bicycle-friendly cities, like Copenhagen and Amsterdam. As the growing number of Melburnians taking up cycling know all too well, however, it is anything but that."

Ref: Editorial, *The Age*, 24/3/09

And also ...

"Why are we not permitted to use our Weekend Saver Met tickets on a public holiday when trains, trams and buses run on a holiday or weekend timetable? Travellers are forced to pay full fares for half the usual service. Please explain, [Transport Minister] Lynne Kosky."

Ref: Phil Bourke, *The Age*, 9/6/09

Health and Urban Design

"According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures almost three quarters of men and half of all women are overweight."



"The cost of obesity on the economy [was] over \$50 billion last year." Ref: ABC News, 2/6/09

"In the last decade there has been growing interest in the impact of the built environment on health and recognition that the design of cities has a profound impact of its residents. This has been fuelled by global

trends in preventable chronic disease and their risk factors including increasing levels of physical inactivity; a global epidemic of obesity in adult and children; rising levels of late onset diabetes (i.e., Diabetes II), and rapid increases in stress, depression and other preventable mental illnesses. These trends are not due to genetics, but to a rapidly changing environment. Well designed urban environments have the potential to facilitate healthy lifestyles and social interactions by actively (e.g., access to recreational facilities) and passively (e.g., providing access to destinations) encouraging residents to be active: socially and mentally. On the other hand, poorly designed low density car dependent cities are bad for health and the environment, increasing driving at the expense of walking, cycling and public transport use."

Ref: Billie Giles-Corti & Kimberley Van Niel, Introduction to State of Australian Cities Conference (in Perth, November 2009)

<http://www.promaco.com.au/2009/soac/health.htm>

Airliner Reduces Spoon Size!

"JAL, Japan's national carrier, has ... looked to shave off any extra weight. The carrier took everything it loads on a 747 and laid it out on a school gym floor to find, and strip, any extra weight. JAL then shaved a fraction of a centimetre from all its cutlery. IATA director of environment Paul Steele said the seemingly minor cuts did make a difference. 'When you are talking about a jumbo jet with 400 people on board, being served two to three meals, this can save a few kilos', he told London's Telegraph. 'You work out how much fuel that consumes over a year, and you can be talking about a considerable amount of money'."

Ref: (Sydney) Daily Telegraph, 11/6/09

Natural Gas as a Transport Fuel

“Running vehicles on methane would be really good for Australia. Methane is the principal component of natural gas, and we have so much of it we cool it to minus 160-degrees to liquefy it, so we can export it. Methane produces 30% to 40% less carbon dioxide than petrol or LPG, costs about one-quarter the price of petrol, and could save Australia \$10-billion per year in foreign exchange. And it's not like it hasn't been done before. The Italians, the New Zealanders and the Indians have been running cars on natural gas for years.

“People say there is nothing the government can do to reduce petrol prices. That makes me so upset. What the people are really saying is, it costs too much to run my car. A relevant fact is that petrol has 32 Megajoules of energy per litre. Look at your gas bill and you will see you pay about 1 cent per Megajoule for natural gas. In other words, you can get the energy of a litre of petrol from 32 cents worth of natural gas. So please don't tell me the government can do nothing about automobile running costs. Making cars which run on natural gas not only reduces the running cost but saves the planet at the same time. The government need only call for tenders for the design and manufacture of three components:

“Component one is a diesel engine able to run on diesel fuel or natural gas. There are diesel engines already which run on a mixture, feeding natural gas into the air intake and using the diesel fuel to light the flame in the cylinder. It will be better to inject the natural gas into the cylinder rather than the intake manifold, so you can run on pure natural gas, and some research might be needed to get that right. The reason we are using a diesel engine is because of the greater efficiency giving more kilometres of travel per kilogram of carbon dioxide output.

“The next component delivers natural gas to these vehicles. One system will be a home compressor which pumps natural gas from your home supply into the tank of your car. These gadgets are already made in the United States. Special metering for road tax and methane detectors for safety will need to be included, nothing that can't be done here. Another system will be for petrol stations and be able to be operated by drivers. It will be similar to the LPG systems we have now. No great challenge.

“Finally, the tank in the car will need to be developed. We can buy them in initially but we should have an Australian manufacturer making these things.

“Now if you are thinking we already have LPG, remember that Liquid Petroleum Gas is only a few percent of what comes out of Bass Strait and the North West Shelf. LPG is the heavier hydrocarbons like propane and butane, and produces nearly as much CO2 as petrol. We need to be able to use the more common lighter ones, particularly methane, if we want low prices for a long time and a reduction in carbon dioxide output.” Ref: Geoff Hudson, Ockham's Razor: The Manhattan Project for Climate Change, ABC Radio National See the full transcript at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2009/2514433.htm#transcript>

Teleconferencing as a Transport

“Super-teleconferencing, is a must for Australia. We Australians know the tyranny of distance all too well. We should be the world experts on telecommuting. And the benefits are huge. Real telecommuting can reduce the cost of home ownership, reduce crowding on roads and public transport, increase leisure time for many people, and reduce petrol consumption and the production of CO2 from that. It is good for the planet, good for people, good for the roads and transport generally, and it reduces house prices and rents.

“Many people say that teleconferencing cannot replace face to face meetings. You may have seen teleconferencing where the images jerk and the audio is sometimes faint or out of sync with the video. Now imagine a system where the only way you can tell that the person is not sitting opposite you is that you can't smell them or touch them, and they look a little two-dimensional. They can pass paper to you by scanning at one end and colour printing at the other. You are both logged on to computers kilometres away behind a firewall, yet you can show your screen to your visitor as if he were alongside you. Part of the key to this alternative is using teleconferencing for one-on-one meetings. You might have to travel to address four or more. But an exchange between just two people can be made very realistic.”

Ref: Geoff Hudson, Ockham's Razor: The Manhattan Project for Climate Change, ABC Radio National See the full transcript at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2009/2514433.htm#transcript>

Money for Old Cars

“The US House of Representatives has approved a measure to provide vouchers of up to \$US4,500 (\$A5,615) for customers to trade-in their old gas guzzlers and buy new fuel-efficient cars and trucks. ... The new personal and work vehicles must have higher fuel mileage than the old trade-in cars.” Ref: AFP, The Age, 10/6/09

Sir Robert Risson (Part 1)

"Sir Robert is best remembered as Chairman of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board [MMTB] from 1949 to 1970, an era when there were constant suggestions from sections of the media and road transport interests that Melbourne's transport policies were 'out of touch' with the rest of the world, that the tramway system was 'antiquated' and that trams should be replaced by bus services.

"Sir Robert was born in 1901 in South East Queensland ... and ... graduated in Civil Engineering before joining the newly formed Brisbane Tramways Trust in 1923. ... After World War II Sir Robert returned to the Brisbane City Council (BCC) Transport Department, rising to the position of Assistant General Manager and Acting General Manager whilst the normal incumbent, Sydney Quinn, was overseas studying the latest transport trends late in 1948.



Major-General Risson
Photo: Australian Army

"It was during this period that Brisbane was at the forefront of modern tramway development. City Aldermen proclaimed that Brisbane led the way in the construction of the finest tramcars in the world. The BCC was introducing resilient wheel tramcars, with modern interior designs (Silver Bullets), making extensive use of concrete track construction during tram track relays, whilst several extensions were completed (Chermside, March 1947, Belmont, July 1948 and Enoggera, August 1949) with others planned. At the time an underground tramway subway was even under consideration for the Petrie Bight intersection in Central Brisbane. The Council was also expanding its bus operations. New buses, with local bodies being built on AEC chassis were being delivered with many more on order. The M&MTB were also about to place orders for a large fleet of AEC buses.

"Meanwhile the Victorian Premier Mr Holloway had just returned from an overseas visit during which he had noticed considerable tramway abandonment was taking place overseas. The M&MTB was asked to prepare an urgent report on the relative merits of trams, trolley buses and buses.

"In October 1949 Sir Robert was appointed Chairman of the M&MTB, succeeding Hector

Bell who had been in that position since 1936. As such Sir Robert was the third of only five individuals to hold this appointment: Cameron, Bell, Risson, Kirby and Snell. Sir Robert's appointment occurred at a very critical time in the history of the M&MTB.

"Despite the general acknowledgment that the buses which had replaced the last of the cable trams in Bourke Street had proved largely unsuccessful, the M&MTB and in particular its Chairman had been accused of being anti-bus. When the M&MTB reaffirmed its decision to proceed with the conversion of the Bourke Street buses to trams in 1949 not all sections of the community shared the same enthusiasm for the project. 'Objection to the decision was voiced by the Secretary of the Chamber of Automotive Industries...who was reported in the press as saying the sooner Mr Bell was removed the better it would be for the motor industry.'

"The newly appointed Chairman soon encountered a period of considerable industrial unrest (in fairness not confined to the tramways), staff shortages and delays in procuring essential supplies. There was a strong push from the union for over award payments. During the war the union had been able to achieve equal pay for women who joined the service from the first day that the recruitment of conductresses became necessary. New tramcar construction did, however, continue, and the M&MTB's long awaited PCC car No 980, which Bell had long sought, entered service in July 1950. Future tramcars, however, were to be of more conventional design.

"When the M&MTB in an attempt to overcome critical staff shortages purchased suburban hostels for recently arrived migrants, there was considerable criticism in State Parliament of the costs involved, and even calls for Bell to be reinstated as Chairman. The Hon MLA for Melbourne (Mr Hayes), said, 'My suggestion is that the present Tramways Board should be removed from office and that a Commission should be appointed to investigate its administration. In the meantime, the former Chairman of the Board, Mr H.H. Bell, should be recalled and entrusted with the conduct of the services.' Sir Robert, however, soon made his own mark on the organisation, his straight down the line, 'yes meant yes' and 'no meant no' management style, combined with total integrity was very much admired by the tramways staff." {To be continued}

Ref: Graeme Turnbull, RMIT Sir Robert Risson Memorial Lecture 2001, 20/4/01

For the full article (including footnotes) see:
www.hawthorntramdepot.org.au/papers/risson.htm#note6

European Passenger Rail (Part 2)

"In the early 1990s, Spain decided to build its high-speed network as standard gauge, instead of the existing Iberian broad gauge. Gauge-changing technology has allowed trains operating on the new dedicated high-speed lines (Madrid–Sevilla & Madrid–Barcelona) to continue to other destinations (Valencia, Granada, Malaga) using existing broad-gauge track.

"Continental Europe uses four different electrical systems requiring a switch in current between countries, and sometimes within countries. Historically, this required a change in motive power, but multi-current locomotives and electric multiple units now exist in large numbers, obviating border stops to change power. Train control systems also differed from country to country. New locomotives and train sets with cab signalling are now able to switch easily from one system to another.

"EU transportation policy and financial support has led to development of a new high-speed train command and control system: the European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS). The system will provide greater capacity and safety, and it will eventually be installed on all high-speed routes. Information technology developments have greatly improved communications for travellers on the trains and at stations, as well as for trip planning, making reservations, and purchasing tickets.

"European nations, individually and collectively, are investing heavily in passenger rail. EU transportation development funds have been especially helpful to smaller countries, including Ireland, Portugal, Greece and new member states from Eastern Europe. Massive national investments in infrastructure also have been critical. In Spain, 4 percent of the GDP has gone to improving infrastructure for almost a decade. Ireland is investing over 6 billion Euros to improve its national rail network from 2006–2015.

"High-speed lines and train sets to operate on them are the most talked-about elements of multiyear national and European investment strategies. A half dozen manufacturers produce rolling stock and locomotives, and Asian companies have also made progress in selling to Europe. France buys TGV sets by the hundreds; Spain has produced its own trains and buys from suppliers elsewhere in Europe; and Ireland is

replacing its rail passenger fleet with new rolling stock from Spain and Korea.

"As media attention is focused on new, dedicated high-speed lines extending from Paris and Madrid; connecting London with Paris and Belgium; linking key cities in Germany; and joining Rome, Naples, and the northern Italian cities, other infrastructure improvements go unnoticed. Double, triple, and quadruple tracking; easing curvature; expanding electrification; upgrading signal and communication systems; and elimination of grade crossings are investments that have increased capacity and allowed for shorter travel times and more frequent services. Major station investments have occurred, too, including the new Central Station in Berlin, the massive rebuilding of London's St. Pancras station, the continuing growth of Zurich's Bahnhof, and the new station in Sevilla.



"Investments have taken intercity rail services to new stations at airports in Zurich, Geneva, Amsterdam, Paris, and elsewhere. Improving connectivity by investments in major intermodal

facilities is a result of policy shifts that emphasize the multimodal nature of travel. Investments are also overcoming geographic barriers to rail travel throughout Europe. The Channel Tunnel project had sceptics and detractors, but few people would argue today that it was not a good investment, especially when considering the profits generated from 2007–2008.

"The great companion water piece is the tunnel–bridge combination that links Denmark and Sweden. Rail trips from Continental Europe and the United Kingdom or the Scandinavian Peninsula were not possible before these projects. The Alps have always been a barrier between Northern and Southern Europe, and the first rail transit through Switzerland occurred as a result of major tunnels built in the early 1900s. A century later, new lower-level base tunnels are reducing travel times. ...

"Policies, technologies, and investments have come together to give rail travel a stronger role in the European transportation network. Trains are capturing an ever larger share of the combined rail–air market in many city pairs separated by up to 400 miles. Europeans and visitors to the continent benefit from the increase in train frequencies and in the reduction of travel times."

Ref: Ron Sheck, Intercity Passenger City

Update #14, January 2009 Full article at:

http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/irps/irps_14.pdf

Photo: Thalys PBKA, Amsterdam Centraal station.