

News

There were two excellent articles in The Age towards the end of last year, ***“Our trams are far from the end of the line”*** by John Legge (26/12/06) and ***“Big is not better when it’s about how we live”*** by David Sornig (27/12/06).

John broached a number of subjects including the value that tram lines add to local property values: *“Several US studies have shown that commercial and residential properties within 400 metres of a tram or light rail route are worth 15 to 20 per cent more than those more than 800 metres away from such a route. In Melbourne, the Box Hill tram extension triggered a 20 per cent jump in commercial property occupancy in the Box Hill area, showing that the tram halo effect is as strong in Melbourne as it is in the US...Nine out of the 10 most expensive Melbourne suburbs have tram or light rail services; none of the 10 least expensive ones has such services.”*

John also advocated a change in the taxing system: *“There are good economic arguments for replacing stamp duty with a general land tax; if this were done, a general rate of 0.5 cents in the dollar of improved value would be sufficient to support an efficient, attractive street transport system for almost the whole of Melbourne.... House buyers in Doncaster or Braybrook pay stamp duty now and they don’t get their property values boosted by an attractive street transport system in return.... Those parts of Mount Eliza where houses are so far apart that neighbours need a telescope to see each other might still have to survive with occasional bus services, but across most of Melbourne’s suburbs, anywhere that densities are at least 10 dwellings per hectare, the most politically, economically and environmentally appropriate form of public within-area transport is the tram.”*

David was promoting an idea we strongly support, that of the ‘urban village’: *“We need to develop suburban spaces that foster the onset of human warmth and intimacy, urban villages that give form to our yearning to linger close to our home places, that allow us to travel by foot or bicycle at a human pace between work and home, that enable us to eat lunch with our families then return to whatever it is we do nearby — places beautiful for the desire they satisfy for comfort and adventure in equal measure... The urban village is a place of meaning to its inhabitants. It is not a paranoid gated community excised like some migration zone from the rest of the city, but a diverse centre of life and living that attracts the rest of*

the city to it. The market for new housing developments should be geared by government so that in the coming clamour to provide housing for the predicted swelling of the city over the next 20 or so years the “pre-car” design principal might be replicated. The development of the urban village concept requires thought, patience and the long view over small spaces as a way of countering the expansionary trend. It can make a considerable contribution towards mitigating greenhouse gas emissions caused by private or public transport and makes a socially meaningful life possible in an unwieldy city”. [The full text of both articles is available on The Age website].

Cranbourne West

In December 2006, Going Solar was appointed by the City of Casey as the sustainability consultants for the development of a 794 hectare greenfields site at Cranbourne West. My role is to encourage the team of consultants - led by the urban design company David Lock Associates – to increase the amount of sustainability on the site.

Traffic reduction and planning around urban villages [see article above] linked by transit corridors, a concept know as ‘pearls-on-a-string’, provides one of the many solutions in working towards communities with net-carbon emissions.

Both the City of Casey and David Lock Associates are to be congratulated for embracing the idea of increasing sustainability in what will hopefully result in one of Melbourne’s most inspirational new urban developments.

Transport Online

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Views from Overseas



Urban Renewal Incorporating Trams in Portland, OR

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