Investing in Public Transport

"Peter Mares: *Labor has lost the seat of Adelaide, held by Minister Jane Lomax-Smith, one of the more solid, respected members, I would have thought, of the Labor cabinet.*
Haydon Manning: *Yes, one would have thought that. But with a 15 per cent swing against Labor in Adelaide, Lomax-Smith, who was the education minister, was swept well and truly out of office. … [however] … In Light, which is to the north of Adelaide around the town of Gawler - outer-suburban northern Adelaide - Labor enjoyed a 2.8 per cent swing. Not bad at all for the local member Tony Piccolo.*
Peter Mares: *There was actually a swing to Labor in that seat?*
Haydon Manning: *Yes, a swing to Labor. I've done a bit of homework this morning, puzzling over why, and there are four key points. …. Plus special bus services and the electrification of rail - transport issues have helped Piccolo and the Labor Party out in the north."* **Ref: The National Interest, ABC Radio National, 21/3/10**
www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2010/2851821.htm

More on the Cost of the Grand Prix

"The cost of the grand prix has skyrocketed since its arrival in 1996 with last year's event costing taxpayers $40 million - more than the cost to taxpayers of all the other annual major events in Victoria combined. The chairman of the Victorian Major Events Company, Sir Rod Eddington, said … 'like all events the grand prix has to be value for money for this city and this state'." **Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 20/3/10**

Car Culture – Revheads Riot

"Police say up to 2,000 people were involved in a protest that turned into a riot at a tyre shop in Oakleigh in Melbourne's south-east. Racing fans had gathered at the intersection of the Princes Highway and Warrigal Road to protest over the cancellation of the Easternats race meet."
Ref: ABC News, 20/3/10
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/20/2851305.htm

Photo: Wayne Hawkins, The Age

Transport Integration Bill (Part 1)

"This bill represents a watershed in the evolution of transport policy and legislation in Victoria and Australia. It confirms an end to the 'old' thinking and outdated debates about transport. In essence, the bill charts the government's new direction in transport policy and delivery, providing a framework for integrated thinking on the best ways to move people and goods across the state. Contemporary transport policy recognises that our transport system should be conceived and planned as a single system performing multiple tasks. It also recognises that our transport system should be planned and delivered in a way that considers the broader social, economic and environmental impacts both now and in the future.

"This means an integrated and sustainable transport system:

- *a system in which each and every transport activity – public transport on road and rail, commercial road and rail transport, private motor vehicles, commercial and recreational water transport, walking and cycling – works together as part of an integrated whole;*
- *a system that complements, and is complemented by, integrated land-use planning and decision making;*
- *a system that is sustainable – in economic terms, in social terms, and in environmental terms;*
- *a system that delivers robust economic, social and environmental benefits for the state, with an eye on national and international responsibilities and opportunities.*

"This has not always been the theme of transport ministers in this house. We have come a long way since the then Minister of Railways, the Honourable R. G. Menzies, KC, spoke at length in this house back in November 1932 arguing that transport legislation was needed as a means to regulate 'the competing agencies in transport'. Seventy-seven years later, this bill takes a very different approach. There are major interdependencies in play across our transport system, so the notion of 'competition' between modes can potentially lead to areas of the portfolio acting to the detriment of the system itself.

"The Brumby government takes a contemporary view of transport and transport policy. By aligning all transport agencies in pursuit of an integrated and sustainable transport system, we are helping to shape a liveable and prosperous Victoria now and in the years ahead. The bill will replace the Transport Act 1983 as Victoria's primary transport statute." {Continued in #148}
Ref: Lynne Kosky, (Former) Victoria Minister for Transport, VicHansard, 10/12/09

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Plans Lodged for Forth Hovercraft

"A hovercraft service across the Forth has moved a step closer to reality, after plans were lodged for a terminal at Portobello. … If the plans are approved, transport giant Stagecoach hopes to start work on the terminal by the year's end, with the service between Edinburgh & Kirkcaldy possibly starting early in 2012. Funding of around £14 million has been secured by Stagecoach, which has set up a joint venture with hovercraft makers the Bland Group to begin the service. The idea could yet falter, however, as the group confirmed they were still looking for 'kick-start' funding from local authorities in Fife & Edinburgh. With the local council currently facing a £90m black hole in its budget over the next three years, and the proposed route not the preferred option between Burntisland & Granton, it remains to be seen if the council would be willing, or able, to invest. A spokesman for Stagecoach said: … 'There would be significant benefits to both areas, for local shops and businesses, and so we are seeking some public sector funding for this project'.

"The application follows a successful trial of the crossing, which takes about 18 minutes, in summer 2007, when it was used by around 32,000 passengers. It is estimated 870,000 people would use the hovercraft each year. The terminal building would be constructed behind Portobello promenade. A hard landing ramp would be built on the beach, as well as a covered shelter for passengers. The hovercraft itself would have room to store bicycles, pushchairs and luggage, and there would also be easy wheelchair access. The service would run every 25 minutes at peak times, and every 30-60 minutes off-peak. It would be able to carry up to 150 passengers and would be able to operate in extreme weather conditions.

"Local councillor Stephen Hawkins said there was still some scepticism among local residents about whether the hovercraft service would be welcome. 'The developers have listened to some of the views expressed after the trial, moving the proposed terminal away from houses on King's Road and opting to use a quieter hovercraft, although the proof of how quiet it is will only come if and when the service starts running', he said. 'The public meeting showed there was scepticism, and local people are concerned about how much the proposals will benefit Portobello. They plan to run buses from the terminal to the city centre, and so people are concerned that the area will have to cope with a lot of additional problems but will not see any real benefit'." **Ref: Gareth Edwards, Edinburgh Evening News, 7/1/10**

Early prototype: The Hoovercraft

And Also …

- *"It's a good idea that worked in trials so can't see the council passing it."*
- *"Great - now can we also get the trams to go to Porty."*
- *"Hovercrafts don't go up steps Gareth. They're much like Daleks in that respect."* **Ref: Comments, Edinburgh Evening News, 7/1/10**

Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 17)

Oz Kayak started as an engineering cadet with the Victorian Roads Authority, later worked with Victorian Railways and today is passionate about active forms of transport, community health and urban design. Here continues our discussion:

OK: You can not put a bus stop everywhere you want. You can not put a seat everywhere you want. And you'll find that the locations for the bicycle stations will also have some social dimensions to them, and then where they actually go – there won't be fifty of them – they'll be in neutral areas.

SI: So is it your feeling that the bike sharing scheme in Melbourne will be successful?

OK: Yes, but it needs to be more finally tuned. After all, it's working in Europe. We talk about Paris: brilliant. There are now, I think, thirty countries that have a form of bike sharing. So as long as it's not only a business case, where the revenue generated by this transport service needs to cover all its costs – it will work, as long as it isn't too expensive to use. Cycling as a mode of transport still needs to be better catered for, which means more money into infrastructure and education. {Continued in #148}

The Australian PM on Victoria

"Mr Rudd said the Victorian Government, which faces an election in November, had underinvested in critical state responsibilities. Asked if the state had spent too little on areas such as public transport and law and order, he answered, 'Yes'." **Ref: Josh Gordon, The Age. 7/3/10**

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Roads Australia (Part 2)

"More must be done to manage demand on our roads more effectively, by giving priority to high occupancy vehicles. It must also be said that state road authorities are already working hard to give priority to people rather than cars, by use of bus lanes, B-signals at traffic lights and other such programs. Continued investment must be made into designing roads that allocate road space to the highest value use. Investment should also be made into smarter management of existing road space to provide greater access for buses and other high occupancy vehicles.

"Australian governments should develop and improve comprehensive integrated strategic and short-term regional transport and land-use plans. The Commonwealth Government has an important role to play in providing a more coordinated approach to regional transport and land-use plans. Such management plans, to be agreed by all levels of government in a region and supported by legislation or inter-agency agreement and budget funding, should have the following components: A longer-term approach to reducing congestion is improved land use planning considering transport impacts. By varying the type, density and pattern/layout of development and by encouraging the use of public transport, planners can influence travel behaviour and reduce car travel. Transit-oriented development is one measure being progressed in many jurisdictions at major transit interchanges to encourage reduced travel and increased public transport use. This involves mixed-use precincts, including residential, retail and commercial and quality, high frequency transit services to major centres.

"Roads Australia supports the introduction of road pricing to improve the efficiency of our roads. For road pricing to be effective, a range of viable public transport options must be available so that travellers can choose to leave the car at home. These public transport options should be across different forms, including bus, light rail, heavy rail as well as non-motorised options such as walking and cycling. Changing travel behaviour through pricing mechanisms includes area or route road use charging, parking pricing and financial measures. Comprehensive road-use pricing schemes impose charges on all motorists that travel within a defined area, either the charges may be levied either for crossing a cordon around the area or for circulating within the area. An example is the London Congestion Charging scheme. Route charging schemes involve charging motorists for travel on single routes and corridors only and includes both toll roads and high occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes - the latter have become popular in the US. Variable tolls can be applied according to time of day, degree of congestion, distance travelled or type of vehicle. Financial and taxation measures aim to provide monetary incentives for travellers to use modes that reduce congestion. Providing travel choices involves reducing the use of single occupant car travel and encouraging travellers to share vehicles, increase vehicle occupancy, use public transport, cycle or walk. Parking policy measures aim to restrain the level of parking and hence of road traffic movements.

"The US Urban Partnerships Program provides grant funding to selected metropolitan areas, including Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Seattle, to address traffic congestion to incorporate congestion pricing, improved transit, telecommuting and technology. Changing aspects of the demand for travel includes measures that reduce the need for travel and change the time of day people travel.

"The TravelSmart program, which operates in many states, incorporates many aspects of voluntary travel behaviour change, including travel planning for households, schools and work places, targeted travel information and awareness campaigns. They encourage reduced use of single occupant vehicles, and increased use of public transport, walking and cycling. Roads Australia, through its Congestion Policy Chapter, is working with its members (more than 60 companies) to encourage adoption of TravelSmart programs in each company. In summary, Roads Australia supports the Commonwealth Government's efforts to invest further in public transport infrastructure and services." **Ref: Roads Australia, Submission to Senate Rural and Regional Affairs & Transport Committee, 27/2/09**
http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat_ctte/public_transport/submissions/sub108.pdf

And Also …

Fran Kelly: *"How are we going for a name for the new [Aussie Rules] Western Sydney team?"*
Warwick Hatfield: *"7000 people, Fran, have apparently taken part in a poll … I'm wondering if those two wonderful suggestions … from Radio National Breakfast listeners: …'The Sprawl' or 'The Squinters' are still in the running? Now, The Sprawl is self explanatory if you ever fly over [the area] … and The Squinters comes about because these poor people have to drive the F4 into Sydney as they are going to work and westwards back towards the Blue Mountains in the evening – they're driving into the sun in both directions".*
Ref: Breakfast, ABC Radio National, 9/3/10

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Active Travel & Adult Obesity (Part 3)

"Transport planning has to take a strong lead in helping to create environments which support active living. Guidance has been issued by a range of organisations including National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) as well as by the Department for Transport. NICE's obesity guidance urges local authorities to work with local partners, such as industry and voluntary organisations, to create and manage more safe and attractive spaces for incidental and planned physical activity. Many public health professionals now believe investment in creating environments conducive to active living to be more effective at countering obesity than interventions centred on structured activities such as aerobics.

"There is strong evidence that inactive lifestyles are an important cause of overweight and obesity. The changing patterns of modern life, which affect both physical activity and food consumption, make it increasingly hard for people to maintain a healthy weight. Historically the UK has invested heavily in facilitating sedentary forms of transport. This balance must now change, with investment priority being given to active, healthy modes such as walking and cycling. The benefits of this will be profound and straightforward: countries with the highest levels of active travel generally have the lowest obesity rates. Governments have made steps in this direction, with policies on public health, but also on transport, planning and climate change all advocating measures to promote growth in active travel. What they have not yet done is to transfer the investment necessary to make these policies reality. Government, at all levels, should set ambitious new targets for walking and cycling and commit to a serious effort to meet them. As is already the case in many other European countries, walking and cycling should be normalised into daily routines from childhood and maintained throughout the life-course.

"There is now overwhelming expert support for a shift to healthy transport policies. Almost 100 organisations, including all significant UK public health bodies, have signed a policy call – 'Take action on active travel' – developed by the Association of Directors of Public Health. They call on governments immediately to commit 10% of transport budgets to active travel.

"Interestingly, given today's difficult financial climate, investment in active travel is significantly cheaper and better value than traditional motor traffic schemes, with cost benefit ratios seven to ten times better. The transport planning decisions which encourage and support active and healthy travel will save money at the point of investment and save again in healthcare costs in the future. We can save millions now, and billions later."

Ref: Sustrans (UK) Information Sheet FH14
http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/AT/Publications/PDFs/FH14_activetravel_and_obesity.pdf

Walking to School (Part 2)

"Reasons given for the decline in walking include distance to school caused by urban sprawl, poor footpaths or crossings, time, poor public transport, concerns about safety and traffic, the convenience of the car - the list goes on. While the list may be long, we rarely hear about the parents who find it easy and enjoyable to allow their children to walk to school, or who take the time to teach their children how to navigate their neighbourhood by themselves. Peer pressure and accusations of being a neglectful parent are barriers to increased walking. Lamentably, parents who happily allow their children to walk to school sometimes report feeling judged as bad parents, rather than being supported for doing so.

"Changing family structures, both parents working outside the home and overscheduled lives mean many parents feel they don't have the time to walk their children to school. Can we approach the time issue more creatively? For many, time spent walking with children is not lost time but family time gained. As many committed walking parents will attest, children open up and talk more when walking. They find out a lot more about what is going on in their children's lives and what they enjoy as well as worries and concerns. Creating more walkable neighbourhoods and getting more people walking for everyday purposes (school, shops, neighbourhood) saves time in the long run. More people walking means safer streets, which will reduce some people's need to drive.

"Some parents choose schools that are most easily accessible by walking and where there are likely to be other children also walking to school. Parents can then share the task of walking younger children to school with other adults and save time on the days it is not their turn to supervise. If we want to increase the number of children walking to school then we need others to also walk rather than drive for other purposes. We cannot expect parents to let their children walk if the rest of the community is hopping in their car for even the shortest of trips. Forty per cent of trips within the Melbourne metropolitan area are less than two kilometres, but most people drive rather than walk.

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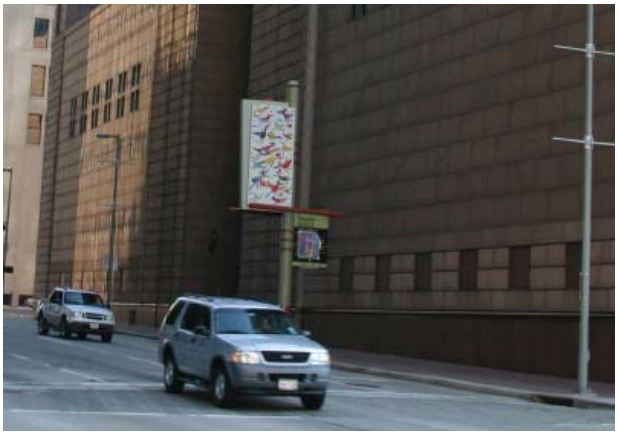
"If those hesitant to walk among us walked a little more, they might be pleasantly surprised and find that the world is not as big, bad and horrible as they may have thought. If there are things in your area that need improving, talk to your neighbours, form a walking action group and make changes. If you drive, drive slowly around neighbourhood streets - children walking to school need to feel safe. Your neighbourhood is at your feet, step out and explore."
Ref: Ben Rossiter, The Age, 1/2/09

Streets as Places (Part 2)

"The street pictured is considered to be a major downtown destination of a well known U.S. city. Yet you hardly see any people! A closer look shows why:

***"1. Blank Walls** The building facades say 'Stay Away'. At the ground floor there are no doors, shops, services or other features that encourage public activity.*

***"2. A Wide Street** A vast expanse of roadway, with six wide traffic lanes, monopolizes most of the space.*



Urban Landscape: Blank Walls

***"3. Fast Moving Traffic** Cars pass by very quickly, which stifles any other activity on the street.*

***"4. Narrow Sidewalks** Although sidewalks, as their name conveys, are for walking, these sidewalk strips are simply too narrow to use.*

***"5. Overall Image** The general impression here is 'People Beware'. Whether or not crime is really an issue, there is a sense of isolation, coupled with the very real threat posed in trying to walk across a street with quickly moving traffic, which makes this area feel unsafe.*

"No wonder this street isn't filled with people. It is not a place. …

"All over the United States today, there are more streets that function merely as conduits for motor vehicles than those that enhance our communities as vital places. Although many began as people-friendly streets that could be shared comfortably by pedestrians and motorists, most have evolved to accommodate an ever-increasing number of cars and trucks. While streets have become wider, sidewalks have become narrower. But no matter how much any street has been widened, it is never wide enough. Every time word gets out that a street has more room for cars, new traffic keeps coming until it's filled up again.

"Widening streets result in diminishing space for people to walk, as well as honking horns and foul emissions that usually drive pedestrians away. This has been compounded by the construction of malls, with vast parking lots that encourage people to drive. Although the automobile has brought us access and convenience that have enriched and eased our lives, it also has been allowed to dominate our environment. Autos helped hasten the disappearance of the distinctive, human-scale places that have long given us a sense of belonging in our communities.

"In 1991, PPS [Project for Public Places] did surveys in two very different communities to find out what quality of life issues were of most importance to the people living there. One was the Sutton Place neighbourhood in New York City, a densely populated area with predominantly high-rise, multi-family dwellings where most people walk and take public transit to get where they're going. The other was Belmont Shore, a neighbourhood commercial district in Long Beach, California, in an area with primarily low-rise, single-family houses, where people generally get around by car.

"Although concerns about crime were expected to predominate in both communities, traffic problems turned out to be the issue of greatest concern. In fact, while most respondents considered their neighbourhoods safe both in the day and evening, most felt that pedestrian safety, vehicle noise and the speed of traffic was a problem at all times. Similar surveys that PPS has conducted reveal that traffic has become one of the most important issues in communities, and frequently the most important one. … With motor vehicles terrorizing our streets, the major response has been to 'get the traffic out of here!' Unfortunately, most solutions devised to improve the situation have only made it worse." {Continued in #148}
Ref: Streets as Places – Using Streets to Rebuild Our Communities, Project for Public Places, 2008 See full report at: www.pps.org/pdf/bookstore/Using_Streets_to_Rebuild_Communities.pdf

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More on the Ford Nucleon

"During the 1950s, much of the world was quivering with anticipation over the exciting prospects of nuclear power. Atomic energy promised to churn out clean, safe electricity that would be 'too cheap to meter'. It seemed that there was no energy problem too large or too small for the mighty atom to tackle during the glorious and modern Atomic Age. It was during this honeymoon with nuclear energy – in 1957– that the Ford Motor Company unveiled the most ambitious project in their history: a concept vehicle which had a sleek futuristic look, emitted no harmful vapours, and offered incredible fuel mileage far beyond that of the most efficient cars ever built. This automobile-of-the-future was called the Ford Nucleon, named for its highly unique design feature… a pint-size atomic fission reactor in the trunk.

William Ford alongside a 3/8 scale Nucleon model

"Ford's engineers imagined a world in which full-service recharging stations would one day supplant petroleum fuel stations, where depleted reactors could be swapped out for fresh ones lickety-split. The car's reactor setup was essentially the same as a nuclear submarine's, but miniaturized for automobile use. It was designed to use uranium fission to heat a steam generator, rapidly converting stored water into high-pressure steam which could then be used to drive a set of turbines. One steam turbine would provide the torque to propel the car while another would drive an electrical generator. Steam would then be condensed back into water in a cooling loop, and sent back to the steam generator to be reused. Such a closed system would allow the reactor to produce power as long as fissile material remained.

"Using this system, designers anticipated that a typical Nucleon would travel about 5,000 miles per charge. Because the power plant was an interchangeable component, owners would have the freedom to select a reactor configuration based on their personal needs, ranging anywhere from a souped-up uranium guzzler to a low-torque, high-mileage version. And without the noisy internal combustion and exhaust of conventional cars, the Nucleon would be relatively quiet, emitting little more than a turbine whine.

"The vehicle's aerodynamic styling, one-piece windshield, and dual tail fins (which are absent in some photographs) are reminiscent of spacecraft from 1950s-era science fiction, but some aspects of the Nucleon's unique design were more utilitarian. For instance, its passenger area was situated quite close to the front of the chassis, extending beyond the front axle. This arrangement was meant to distance the passengers from the atomic pile in the rear, and to provide maximum axle support to the heavy equipment and its attendant shielding. Another practical design aspect was the addition of air intakes at the leading edge of the roof and at the base of the roof supports, apparently to be used as part of the reactor's cooling system.

"Ford's nuclear automobile embodied the naive optimism of the era. Most people were ignorant of the dangers of the atomic contraption, as well as the risk that every minor fender-bender had the potential to become a radioactive disaster. In fact, the Nucleon concept was often received with great enthusiasm. Some sources even claim that the US government sponsored Ford's atomic car research program.

"The Nucleon's silent, sleek, and efficient design was poised to secure its place in the American lifestyle of the future. It seemed inevitable that the internal combustion engine would fade into obscurity, becoming a quaint relic of a pre-atomic past. But the Nucleon's design hinged on the assumption that smaller nuclear reactors would soon be developed, as well as lighter shielding materials. When those innovations failed to appear, the project was scrapped due to conspicuous impracticality; the bulky apparatus and heavy lead shielding didn't allow for a safe and efficient car-sized package. Moreover, as the general public became increasingly aware of the dangers of atomic energy and the problem of nuclear waste, the thought of radioactive 'atomobiles' zipping around town lost much of its appeal. Atoms had broken their promise; the honeymoon was over. Ford never produced a working prototype, nevertheless the Nucleon remains an icon of the Atomic Age. In spite of the Nucleon's flaws, its designers deserve a nod for their slapdash ingenuity. Their reckless optimism demonstrates that one shouldn't consider a task impossible just because nobody has tried it yet – some ideas need to be debunked on their own merit." **Ref: Alan Bellows, The Atomic Automobile, DamnInteresting.com, 27/8/06**

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