

Sustainable Cities

"Sustainability is not an add-on – rather it is an essential component of future urban policy direction. ... Transport emissions are projected to increase by 22.6% over the period 2007 to 2020. ... The cities of tomorrow will need to confront our energy-intensive lifestyles, our water consumption, the growth in motor vehicle dependency, in congestion and transport emissions. ... Liveability is a concept increasingly used to describe what people experience as positive in their environments. It means such things as low levels of pollution, good public transport, neighbourhoods which enable pedestrian traffic, tree lined streets, well designed buildings and civic centres, useable public spaces, access to open and green space, and the availability of recreational and cultural facilities. ... How we plan and shape our cities, right down to neighbourhood level, is critical for our quality of life. Housing affordability is a big factor in liveability and it's been on our agenda in Australia now for some years."

"What we also need to be thinking about is the concept of living affordability, that is, the cost of running a home and costs associated with location. Patterns of outward urban expansion to areas with limited access to employment and services, and few public transport options, have left some Australian families particularly vulnerable to increases in fuel costs. Despite a trend towards smaller households, in some states and territories up to 80% of new dwellings are single detached housing, largely on green-field sites. The average number of people per household dwelling declined from 3.1 in 1976 to 2.6 in 2006, but the average number of bed-rooms per dwelling rose from 2.7 to 3. The proportion of dwellings with 4 plus bedrooms increased from 17% to 28%. This mismatch between demographic trends and housing stock is unsustainable. There was a lack of alignment within some jurisdictions between metropolitan land use plans and infrastructure proposals submitted for Infrastructure Australia's consideration. This led to the establishment of the COAG Cities Planning Taskforce and ... COAG has agreed that, by 1 January 2012, all States will have in place city plans that meet the criteria. And we will not be shy about tying future Commonwealth funding to those city plans. ... In January 1962, John F. Kennedy asked the United States Congress to approve a new department of urban affairs. He said - 'We will neglect our cities to our peril, for in neglecting them, we neglect the nation'."

Ref: Anthony Albanese, State of our Cities Report Launch, Qld Media Club, 5/3/10

Federal Plan on Transport

"Only leadership from the federal government will help to achieve the large-scale changes needed for the nation's transport networks, a coalition of national transport organisations says. The group, made up of the Australasian Railways Association, International Association for Public Transport and the Bus Industry Confederation of Australia, has presented an action plan to Transport Minister Anthony Albanese. The plan, which outlines seven points to improve passenger land transport in Australia, includes providing increased investment in public transport and freight capacity to reduce road congestion; reforming road pricing and taxation; and improving fuel efficiency for cars to

European standards in the next five years. ... Bus industry confederation executive Michael Apps says if no action is taken, Melbourne may become the 'Jakarta of Australia' where more than 1500 new vehicles hit the road each day"

Ref: AAP, SMH, 10/3/10



'It says traffic-wise Jakarta's become the Melbourne of Indonesia - but then we don't have Mikey'

"The number of vehicles in greater Jakarta has almost tripled in the past eight years to 9.52 million, causing traffic chaos."

Ref MX News, 23/2/10



Photo: 'Jakarta Inside Out', 2002

Mexico City's Air

"There is something new in the air when authorities cannot agree on whether Mexico City is still among the world's worst in terms of pollution. 'It is possible that we may no longer be in the worst five', said [researcher Aaron] Jazcilevich, noting that Mexico's capital's air now trails Cairo as well as Indian and Chinese cities on the most-polluted list."

Ref: AFP, The Age, 18/3/10

State of Australian Cities

“The level of car dependency in Australian cities has increased at a faster rate than population growth, creating traffic congestion problems as infrastructure and public transport have failed to keep pace with population growth. Congestion, the bane of urban dwellers, if not addressed will continue to grow as a serious negative not only for lifestyle but also for the negative economic impacts. Quoting the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, the report estimates that the avoidable cost of congestion for the Australian capitals was approximately \$9.4 billion in 2005. Projections show that by 2020 this cost will rise to \$20.4 billion, impacting adversely on Australian productivity and national, state and territory and local economies.

“Congestion not only lengthens working hours but also tilts the work/family balance contrary to the aspirations of the majority of Australians. In addition, congestion leads to productivity declines. In Australia’s eight capitals, the freight task – the movement of goods – is expected to grow by 70% between 2003 and 2020 and, as trucks compete with other traffic in ever more congested roads, productivity will decline and costs to business increase. Congestion and growing vehicle numbers result in air quality declines. Transport emissions are one of the strongest sources of emissions growth in Australia. That growth is expected to continue, with direct CO₂-equivalent emissions projected to increase 22.6% between 2007 and 2020 – or around 1.58% a year. Declining air quality is linked to commonly reportable health conditions among children and young adults, with respiratory conditions and exposure to urban air pollution now accounting for 2.3% of all deaths.

“All three spheres of Australian government – national, state and territory, and local – have roles to play in addressing and meeting the key challenges and opportunities to improve the productivity, liveability and sustainability of Australia’s cities. This can only be achieved by working in partnership with communities and the private sector. The design of urban environments can contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities by supporting active living, active and passive recreation opportunities, public transport and social connectivity. Evidence suggests that well-designed public open space is restorative for the community, reducing the mental fatigue and stress of urban living. Australian cities can provide many opportunities to lead the nation towards a more sustainable future. The way cities are planned, built and function can promote more efficient use of

resources, including water, energy and land, minimise the production of waste and encourage more reuse and recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support biodiversity in and around urban areas through better management of open and green space.”

Ref: Major Cities Unit, State of Australian Cities, March 2010 Report: www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/files/MCU_SOAC.pdf

“There are 18,000 residents in the central city [area of Melbourne] and the number of residents is predicted to grow to 24,000 by 2015.”

Ref: Melbourne News, March 2010

The Parry People Mover

Labour’s Transport Secretary Andrew Adonis is on a ‘great rail journey’ from Penzance to Aberdeen (travelling standard class). He stopped near Birmingham to see the Parry People Mover.

“In Stourbridge, the innovative ‘Parry People Mover’ is providing a brilliant tram-style service on the branch line from Stourbridge Junction to Stourbridge Town - a much more frequent service than when it was a conventional train, and far more energy efficient. Labour candidate Lynda Waltho persuaded my predecessor to fund the scheme, and John Parry, the entrepreneur behind it, is an evangelist for its potential to expand rail access, economically, in other towns and cities.”

Ref: Andrew Adonis’ Blog, 14/4/10
www.greatrailjourney.com/

“The Secretary of State for Transport Lord Adonis was on the campaign trail with Lynda Waltho in Stourbridge this week. ... Lynda said: ... ‘I can’t think of a better venue than a light rail car that’s helping us travel towards a green economy and the site of our soon-to-be-built £7m transport interchange’. Lord Adonis, who was impressed by the Cradley Heath built Parry People Mover, said: ‘This is absolutely fantastic and the type of project that we want to see more of in this country’.”

Ref: Stourbridge News, 15/4/10

“Lord Adonis, who described the service at Stourbridge as ‘a brilliant tram-style service’, told reporters that the Parry People Movers railcars – which have been running since May 2009 – could offer new opportunities for the UK transport authorities and also had good export potential. ... The Liberal Democrats, as well as small parties including the Greens and UKIP, say they would plan to re-open closed branch lines. The Conservatives say that they would discourage any buildings being put on former railway routes so they would be available for re-opening.”

Ref: Parry Media Release, 15/4/10
www.parrypeoplemovers.com/PR2010-04-15.htm

Air Crash Investigation

"As a 13,000 hour pilot and having flown both Boeing and Airbus, I feel that I am qualified to comment on the [June, 2009] Air France crash with some authority. First, know that there are two forces operating in all airline investigations. The convention allows about \$50,000 per seat per passenger if it's 'pilot error'; and about \$1 million per seat if the cause can be traced to the company; so usually the companies try everything to blame it on the pilot. Case in point: 'Mount Erebus'. Even when the Royal Commissioner correctly apportioned blame to Air New Zealand, saying that he had been told a 'litany of lies'; even after appealing to the UK Privy Council; they eventually had the case decided in a New York Lower Court, in the early 1990s,

cause: 'pilot error'. In this, Air France hasn't said a word yet, but they will – that's the first force.



Mount Erebus Photo: US Geological

"The second are the lawyers, trying to coerce passenger's families to mount huge case against airlines, manufacturers, air controllers – anyone with money. Their job is to make the crash seem inevitable, and never the cause of the pilots. But 95% of crashes are these days caused by pilots – that's because the engineers have fixed the problems with the planes, computers have fixed the problems with controls, terrain navigation and a million other things, leaving the pilot as the weak link. This crash was a stuff-up. The Air France guys ran into an active thunderstorm on the Inter-Tropical Convergent Zone. Passengers prefer systemic failures. They can't get their head around the immense forces of nature that we who transverse the ITCZ every time we have to. ...

"Auto avoidance of active [weather] cells in the atmosphere around planes could solve the issue of pilot error and, we'd be one step closer to the aviation joke about Airbus: 'In the future there will only be a pilot and a dog up front. The dog's job is to bite the pilot if he touches anything. The pilot's job is to feed the dog'." **Ref: Letter to Saturday Extra, ABC Radio National, 30/1/10**
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/saturdayextra/>

On the NZ Rail Network Closures (Pt 1)

"Make one road transport company build and maintain and use only their own roads. Add all costs, calculate freight revenues to see viability. Now let 1000+ other road companies have unrestricted access, paying 40% of attributable road damage and renewal, – and none for infrastructure capacity expansion, accidents, pollution. Deem the first company a failure requiring subsidies. Don't calculate the public's annual billions propping up the other lot in comparison and give them extremely favourable funding and policy arrangements too. Making truckies pay all their costs and providing their own infrastructure isn't feasible. Expecting only rail to do so and continuing this ridiculous imbalance is a failure proven multiple times. The time has come to create several freight co-operatives to integrate, invest in and run rail (as one entity) alongside Government while not increasing trucker's costs-is possible. Balanced transport policy, funding and assessment assists economic recovery increasing freight sector efficiency. Growth means more trucks- still doing the lions share with rail providing complementary economies of scale. Common truck sector crashes indicate over-competition stress, recent truck blockades indicate the current road funding and policy monopoly. NZ needs to move forward and develop and better use, not destroy our rail system." {Continued in #153}
Ref: Kevin Sharp, 5/3/10

High-Speed Rail Link to China

"China is in negotiations with 17 countries to build a high-speed rail network to India and Europe with trains capable of running at more than 320 km/h within the next 10 years. One network would run from London to Beijing and then to Singapore, according to Wang Mengshu, a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. A second project would carry trains through Russia to Germany and into the European railway system, and a third line would extend south to connect Vietnam, Thailand, Burma and Malaysia. Passengers could board a train in London and step off in Beijing, 8160 kilometres away as the crow flies, in just two days. 'The best-case scenario is that the three networks will be completed in a decade', Mr Wang said."
Ref: The Age, 10/3/10

And Also ...

"Girl to Friend: 'How do Essendon [football club] get the [name] Bombers?'"
Friend: 'It's probably because of Essendon airport'.
Girl: 'Essendon doesn't have an airport. I would know if it had one'." [It does.]
Ref MX, 23/2/10

PT: Life-Blood of a City (Part 2)

"The continuing failure of governments and others to greatly extend Melbourne's trunk public transport system, in the face of the almost complete universality and superior efficiency and safety of public transport over urban private car travel, is quite clearly seriously discriminatory. Our governments need to be regularly reminded of this.

"Further, our current attitude towards remedying road traffic congestion is over-simplistic, blinkered and shallow. Because private car travel is a significantly inefficient user of space, there are more efficient transport alternatives available which need to be considered. When compared with public transport travel, car travel needs from 2.3 to 5 times as much space for carrying the equivalent numbers of people. The classic example comes from the work of the 1920s Metropolitan Town Planning Commissioners.

"If all the people who travelled across Princes Bridge by tram or bus in the peak periods were to do so instead by private car (mean car occupancy then was between 1.5 and 2 persons per car, not today's 1.2 to 1.5), the existing six traffic lanes would have to be increased to fourteen – a calculation which takes account of the signalized intersections at end of the bridge. Because of its importance, this example continued to be quoted in the annual reports of the Town and Country Planning Board in the later 1940s (when R D Fraser was its chairman).

"Also, the roads alternative is the more costly. Today, people think that suburban railway tunnels are extraordinarily costly, and do not hesitate to readily accept the need for road tunnels. Yet, for tunnels of equal person-carrying capacity, the road tunnels cost at least three times the cost per km for a rail tunnel. For example, a single track rail tunnel has a seated passenger capacity of 20 000 persons per hour. The three lanes of a single direction road tunnel have a safe capacity of 1500 vehicles/hour at 60 km/h, and 1200 vehicles/hour at 100 km/h for the same defined degree of safety. Thus, with three traffic lanes in the one direction, the capacity (for an average 5-seat car) is from 18,000 to 22,500 seat/hour. At the current average car occupancy of 1.2 person/car, these three traffic lanes would together carry from 7200 to 9000 person/h (just less than half the capacity of the single track rail tunnel).

"So, to deliberately choose to widen existing roadways and build new roads instead of first building the urgently needed trunk and local-

feeder public transport routes, is to continue exacerbating an already most transport-inefficient situation. Under these circumstances, no new road schemes ought to be planned and evaluated without taking proper account of the more transport-efficient (and less costly) public transport alternatives. It is no longer adequate to say that road extensions are needed to carry the future expected increases in road traffic. This constitutes a type of self-fulfilling prophecy.

"Times now have greatly changed, with their need for compact urban areas, transport safety and efficiency, energy efficiency and the current environmental sustainability imperative, and are such that viable public transport alternatives need to be found to carry the people who might otherwise continue travelling by private car, before any roads projects are even considered. A corollary of this is that, before governments consider propping up the car manufacturing industries, such subsidies are granted only on condition that these manufacturers diversify their industry to also manufacture the currently much-needed trains, trams and buses. Such subsidies would then make financial, transport safety and efficiency, and environmental sense." {Cont. #153}
Ref: Louis Fouvy, 3/2/10

Auto Industry Resists

"The [Australian] government wants a tough European regulation to apply by 2012. It is also due to unveil a new policy forcing the car makers to cut carbon dioxide pollution from vehicles. But the [car] industry says it cannot make the required changes within the government's preferred time frame."

Ref: Katharine Murphy, The Age, 27/4/10

What Would You Do?

What would you do to improve public transport if you were Premier of Victoria? PT4me2 have an on-line survey. Here are my suggestions:

- Fast ferries (hovercraft) on Port Phillip Bay linking bus, tram and train services and bike and walking tracks.
- 'Light Trams' (like the Parry system – see Page 2) for regional cities and for creating urban villages in suburban areas using these Light Trams to link to rail services.
- Turn Victoria Street, Carlton, into a boulevard with trams providing the missing east-west link across the top of the city, while reducing car numbers, speed, noise and pollution.

Submit your ideas at:

<https://editpostie.e2ma.net/app2/survey/25365/17802/3d6ef9cd14/8196114474/2741724/93751771/>

More on the Clem7

“Lower than expected volumes on the Clem7 has made Brisbane City Council nervous about the prospects of its next toll road project, Lord Mayor Campbell Newman conceded yesterday. Just 22,000 vehicles used the new tunnel daily in the first Monday to Friday period after the toll was introduced, well under the 65,000 a day who used it prior. ... Council recently paid the outstanding \$503 million for the Clem 7 tunnel.”

Ref: Tony Moore, Brisbane Times, 21/4/10

Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 22)

SI: With the trams in Swanston Street [Melbourne], I'm intrigued as to why they are often delayed at the minor cross streets?

OK: As far as when they cross Little Collins Streets or Flinders Lane, etc., I don't know the logic.

SI: My suspicion is that those intersection [traffic] lights were designed for the time when the street was used by motor vehicles. So I suspect that the timing [of the light change sequence] was designed to suit the motor vehicles, which doesn't actually suit the trams – they are just being caught up in it. I know that you have to allow time for pedestrians to cross but [for example] in the early evening, quite often there are no cars going through those intersections, yet the tram still has to stop because the driver has to obey the red light.

OK: Sometimes the drivers can over-ride the [traffic] lights ...

SI: ... Always? ...

OK: ... But I don't think they can in the CBD.

SI: There are some places where they can?

OK: Oh Princes Street [Carlton] in particular. They [the tram drivers] have control.

SI: And that works?

OK: Oh yes, I can see the efficiency.

SI: I wonder why they don't do it more often.

OK: Probably a cost factor ...

SI: ... But what about the cost of delaying a tram full of people ...

OK: ... And somebody has decided that it's probably of marginal improvement. Probably not worth the investment. {Continued in #153}

Transport Integration Bill (Part 6)

“Victoria's transport legislation is being completely rewritten with a more logical and integrated structure and reflecting contemporary policy and regulation. This major reform program has been under way for a number of years, with important milestones to date including: the Rail Safety Act 2006; the Transport Legislation (Safety Investigations) Act 2006; the introduction of taxi industry accreditation in 2006 (Transport (Taxi-cab accreditation and Other Amendments) Act 2006); the Accident Towing Services Act 2007, the Bus Safety Act 2009; the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009; and other important legislative initiatives aimed at improving integration and sustainability outcomes including improved safety, road priority and compliance.

“Proposed future reforms include a new marine safety bill, a new taxi and hire car bill, a new walking and cycling bill, and a new road safety bill. Each of these will be major reforms in their own right, all within the framework established by this bill. This reform program has positioned Victoria as the national leader in modern transport policy and legislation.

Conclusion

“In essence, the Transport Integration Bill:

- 1. places a requirement on transport bodies and key non-transport bodies to have regard for the objectives and decision-making principles of the bill;*
- 2. requires planning to be undertaken in line with this policy framework;*
- 3. establishes transport bodies under one piece of legislation, with a common goal to work together to foster greater integration and sustainability.*

“This bill lays the policy and legislative foundation for an integrated and sustainable transport system. It affirms the importance of an integrated and sustainable transport system for a modern and prosperous economy, for an inclusive and vibrant community, and for a clean and green environment. In so doing, it shapes the direction of Victoria's transport system for current and future generations. Generations that will see the benefits, right across the state and in their local neighbourhood, as the Victorian transport plan is put into action.” **Ref: Lynne Kosky, (Former) Victoria Minister for Transport, VicHansard, 10/12/09**

And Also ...

“Flight attendants owed up to nine months' wages by a grounded Spanish airline have posed nude for a calendar to draw attention to their plight.”

Ref: The Age, 1/4/10

Sacrificing to Suburbia (Part 4)

Kim Jones' article starts in #149. Below continues some of the responses to the article:

"Greater density will only work to help foster human wellbeing if it is done in particular ways and with constant reference to what people and neighbourhoods need. ... The very best urbanists such as Jane Jacobs knew the value of a tight, connected, dense, built environment. But she saw the evil that comes of increased density especially when organic human neighbourhoods were forced to make way for the faddish schemes of developers and architects and planners. Human communities need a human scale, the presence of work and retail, stability of tenants or owners, and generous, welcoming environments for young and old. We need green spaces and trees and vegetable plots and frequent public transport as well as good parking and roads for cars. Hi-rise buildings will not achieve that. But 3-4 (maybe 5) storey buildings of generously sized flats and larger family sized units will. Hubris will wreck everything. No small elite should ever take it on themselves to remake a city to their own design. Encourage intelligent human scale redevelopment in suburbia and regional towns but foster human freedom too."

Ref: 'Ally', Comments, The Age, 22/1/10

"In this time of increasing development and population growth, the decisions we make now will shape the city for a long time to come. The suburbs are sprawling out and inner suburbs are becoming higher density. Just having higher density suburbs doesn't make them more liveable, often the opposite. Many suburbs are wastelands, miles of banal private housing intersected by noisy dangerous roads and punctuated by soulless shopping centres and mega-stores. And yet this is where we spend our lives, making the best of these uninspiring living environments. ... Higher density urban living can be an inspiring way to live, but the planning needs to be there. People will want to live in higher density housing when the social and community space around it is good enough to make up for the lack of private outdoor space. I could live in an apartment if it was next to a beautiful park, and I could walk to community shopping and public transport. It is possible to re-imagine and re-invent our cities as great places to live."

Ref: 'Andrew', Comments, The Age, 22/1/10

"I travelled to Barcelona last year, and was very impressed at some of the street developments. (try GoogleEarth). Here whole blocks were

developed so that there was no street setback. Buildings were several stories high all around the edge of each block. But the feature that stood out to me was that the inside of lots of these blocks contained playgrounds, gardens, piazzas, etc. If city residents wanted to have a more congenial place to live, I wonder if whole street blocks could get together and decide how to set out their space better. Given peak oil is just around the corner (or here!) then the downstairs areas could be shops including hairdressers, doctor's and dentist rooms, offices, etc as in Barcelona. Or even gyms, artist studios, men's sheds, whatever that group of residents already living on the block want. Upstairs could be lots of housing: several stories of it. Perhaps with roof top gardens. But the interesting part of the development would be the inner part of the block. Gardens, playgrounds, fruit trees, veggies, the list should only be limited by the imagination of the residents. This to me is a much better way to build medium density living, not leaving it to developers."

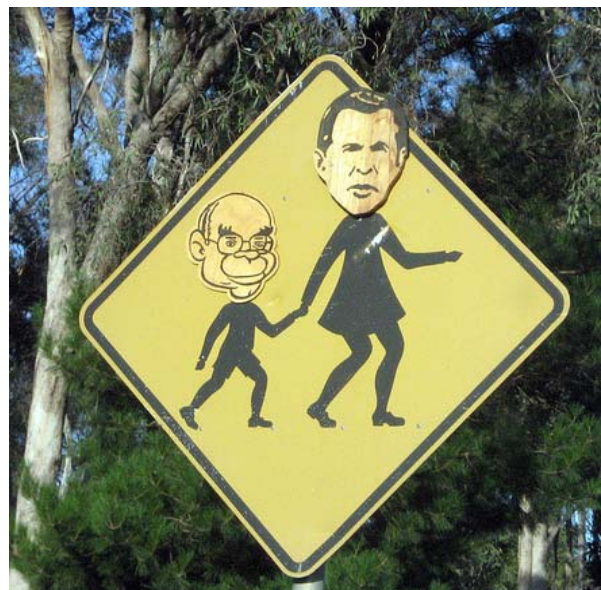
Ref: 'Helen', Comments, The Age, 22/1/10

Cosy Communities

"[Qld] Premier Anna Bligh said new growth could be accommodated by clever urban development. 'We could be thinking locally of 15-minute neighbourhoods - where everything you need to live, work and play is within 15 minutes' walking distance', she said. 'Before the car, it's how communities evolved and in an era of climate change we should do it again'."

Ref: Marissa Calligeros, Brisbane Times, 31/3/10

And Also ...



Ref: www.infrastructurist.com/2009/04/16/gallery-amusingly-defaced-street-signs/