

Moving People

"Melburnians average at least 1000 kilometres a year more behind the wheel of their car than people in any other Australian city, [Moving People, a report by the Australasian Railway Association, the nation's bus industry and the International Association of Public Transport] shows. According to federal transport department figures, Melbourne drivers on average travel 11,500 kilometres a year This compares to Sydney where they do 10,500 kilometres a year and Adelaide, where drivers cover 10,750 kilometres. Public transport - where patronage levels have increased in recent years in Melbourne - still lags a long way behind the car. The average Melburnian travels 1328 kilometres a year on public transport, compared to 1880 kilometres in Sydney.

"The Moving People report also shows that road transport is the nation's third largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions. This week's state budget showed that, for Victoria's 5.5 million inhabitants, there were 4.7 million registered vehicles. This would grow by almost 200,000 next financial year, budget papers predicted. The budget also contained government figures indicating trips on trains rose by 3 million in the last year to 217 million, that trips on trams had risen by 4 million to 182 million and that bus journeys had increased by 2 million to 102 million. Simultaneously though, satisfaction with the city's trains and trams fell slightly, likely as a result of continued overcrowding at peak times. Reliable figures on journeys to work by bicycle and walking are less conclusive. The last census, in 2006, showed just 1.3% of workers took their bike and 3.6% walked. That same census showed that the number of cars driven to work had risen substantially between 1976 and 2006, with an increase in the percentage of people driving to work up from 67.7% to 78.1%.

"The Moving People report points to population growth as a key factor that will put Australia's existing transport systems under increasing pressure. The report recommends that state and federal government pour more money into public transport, that governments come up with better ways of moving freight than the current reliance on trucks, and that drivers are charged for the amount they use the roads. It also says that Australia's cities must be made more compact to make them more walking and cycling-friendly places. The Bus Association of Victoria, which represents more than 500 operators, recently found that one in four Melburnians lacked public transport on Sundays."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 8/5/10

Vital Urban Rail Infrastructure

"Repairing vital city rail infrastructure ... is always done far too late and seemingly, begrudgingly. Meanwhile our cities are becoming more congested, traffic grinds to a halt, commuters' quality of life diminishes, and we use more fuel and produce more emissions. It is not just an Australian problem. Try to get on the underground in London at peak hour in the evening if you want to see infrastructure not coping. ... On the Rome metro, you'll find carriages jam-packed even outside peak travel times. ... Even



when projects do finally get moving on improving infrastructure, things don't stand still. ... Sydney is projected to add a new suburb each year for the next 30 years; and there is a failure to provide even projects promised for existing suburbs. ... Every new suburb is a nightmare in waiting. No rails means more cars, more congestion, more wasted time, greater economic cost."

Ref: Robin Bromby, The Australian, 8/5/10

Portland (Oregon) 'Improvement'???

"The ever present automobile parking problem in the business and industrial areas has been cause for concern and for considerable study on the part of the officials. One effective measure aimed to help the situation, the installation of parking meters, has evidently been successful and has met with public approval. We believe that the traffic and parking problems may be improved by allowing traffic in one direction only on all east-west streets west of the Wilamette, except certain streets approaching the bridges; alternate streets being designated for west-bound and for eastbound traffic. We believe that cars may be parked with greater facility on one-way streets, and there is no doubt but that the resultant conditions favour the pedestrian. Every large city has found it desirable, and after trial popular, to designate streets for one-way traffic. ... Parking lots, now an important factor in the downtown areas, may disappear when building becomes active again. Thought should be given to the problem of downtown parking, and the erection by private capital of attractive ramp garages in designated areas, not over three stories above the ground, should be encouraged."

Ref: Portland Improvement, November 1943
www.portlandmercury.com/images/editorial/20090930/Portland%20Improvement%20-%20Robert%20Moses%201943.pdf

On the Melbourne Ferry Issue

“Today, despite all the talk about booming cycling numbers and rocketing public transport patronage, the number of people driving into Melbourne’s central area each weekday still hovers around 35%. Melbourne City Council has approved hundreds of new car spaces in purpose-built multilevel towers since 2006 and traffic choking the West Gate and Eastern freeways each morning is predominantly headed in one direction: the CBD. In 1964, only 26% of those who worked in central Melbourne drove to work, with 72% catching a train, tram or bus. As cars became cheaper and bigger roads were built to funnel more traffic in, this shot up to the point where in 2006 80% of journeys around Melbourne were by car. But as the city’s population grows – and especially as development starts to move the city’s business centre into Docklands – where does central Melbourne need to head to make sure it is not choked by traffic?”

“As most train users know, the public transport system is creaking under the pressure of overcrowding at peak times and, increasingly, at off-peak times. Metro Trains last week released figures showing 40,000 commuters now pass through Southern Cross Station every day, a 40% jump since 2006. And according to public transport marketing agency Metlink, there were an additional 93 million trips made on trains, trams and buses last year compared with 2006. Patronage is growing, according to figures released by Public Transport Minister Martin Pakula, but at a slower rate of 2.8 per cent in the past year, down from 11% in 2007. And a survey by Metlink found that 66% of respondents believed that more people will rely on public transport than cars in future. The idea of charging road users to enter Melbourne’s city area has fallen off the agenda comprehensively – which doesn’t mean it is not being considered.

“... It is not clear whether there is any genuine strategy to get people on to public transport, because the government knows not many more people can fit onto the train and tram services travelling into the CBD. Cycling is pushed by all and sundry as a way of making transport sustainable, but for many who need to travel long distances, cars are the only viable option. And despite government spin about new road hierarchies, setting out some streets for public transport, others for cars and others for pedestrians and cyclists, there is little will power to do anything radical that would change the status quo. The Yarra River is one area that could be changed as more people come to live on its banks as part of the many Docklands

developments now under way or due to begin over the next two decades.

“In 2008, the government commissioned engineers Maunsell to study commuter ferry services on Port Phillip Bay. While the consultants found there was insufficient demand across much of the bay for ferry services, this will change over time as Melbourne’s population grows to 5 million and beyond. Docklands, Maunsell found, was not a feasible site for a commuter ferry service because of speed restrictions on the Yarra River - to get from Station Pier to Docklands would take 50 minutes. ‘If the speed restrictions on the Yarra River could be lifted, this option would become more viable’, the report said, nominating the eastern edge of Victoria Harbour as the ideal place for a ferry terminal. ‘This location would provide direct access to the tram services along Harbour Esplanade and up La Trobe Street’, it said. It noted that several routes - the 30, 48 and City Circle trams – passed nearby. But ferries are a long way off for Melbourne, and all the signs are that the car will remain Melbourne’s dominant mode of transport for many years.”

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 26/3/10

Clay’s article correctly identifies the issues of encouraging more parking in Melbourne’s CBD while failing to provide sufficient public transport. However in 2008 the State Government did not commission a report to study commuter ferries on the whole of Port Phillip Bay but rather on a limited corridor between Melbourne and Geelong. The delivered ferry report, with a freeway on the front cover (which gives an indication of its content), is flawed in several areas. It has been suggested that the report is a ploy by the government to bury the ferry proposal. This is strange given all of the spin on sustainability and the recognised cost of congestion. Meantime, Europe is rediscovering its waterways for both commuters and freight, and ferries operate in worse weather conditions around the world than are found on our bay. There are no social, economic, environmental, or climatic barriers to using ferries on Port Phillip Bay as long as the correct vessels are selected and appropriately scheduled. Given that the cities of Geelong and Melbourne spread almost right around the bay, ferries can support existing modes of public transport, tourism, & encourage walking & cycling.

Ref: Stephen Ingrouille, 3/4/10

And Also ...

“A woman driver was caught flossing her teeth as she drove at 112kph on a motorway [in Wales]. ... She was fined \$100 and lectured about careless driving.” **Ref: MX, 1/3/10**

Pedestrians to Reclaim Queen Street

"Brisbane City Council will start work on a \$3 million revitalisation project to reduce Queen Street to one lane in each direction between Edward Street and the General Post Office, creating a 'subtropical' tree-lined boulevard in the process. Lord Mayor Campbell Newman said the changes would improve safety for 40,000 people who walked across the intersection each day. ... 'Boulevarding this corner out into the left lane will significantly improve the safety of pedestrians using this intersection, which outnumber cars by more than 20 to one. ... This is an exciting opportunity to improve a vital pedestrian connection between retail, business and dining precincts', Cr Newman said. 'The revitalisation will give the city a green, pedestrian-friendly area in the heart of Brisbane for residents, CBD workers & visitors'."

Ref: Daniel Hurst, Brisbane Times, 18/2/10

"Put back the trams. It works in Melbourne - for a laugh put the trams through the Clem7 [road tunnel]. Clem [Jones, former Brisbane Mayor] took the tracks up years ago for buses."

Ref: Daniel Hurst, Brisbane Times, 18/2/10

Clem Jones and Brisbane Trams (Part 1)

"Traditionalists were aghast when the Lord Mayor, seduced by an American dream of 'working men' commuting each day in their own cars, announced a year earlier that the trams would be scrapped. A fire at the Paddington depot in 1962 - which destroyed 65 trams - helped seal their demise. The changeover to buses, the 'modern, European means of mass transport', was designed to take place on a Sunday to minimise road chaos. It was a good idea, but failed miserably. Nostalgia buffs jammed the remaining services - significantly wound back by then - resulting in the biggest crowds since World War II. Police had to be called in to control jostling among a group of 300 people which threatened to descend into a riot. Others went on a looting and vandalism spree. When the first tram-free day dawned on April 14, [1969] the council's transport committee chairman, Roy Harvey, assured commuters that there would be one bus trundling down Grey St in South Brisbane every 16 seconds during the rush hour. 'It will settle down in three days, I hope', he said."



Convenient ... in the days before everyone had a car, the tram was the handiest way to get around. Photo: Courier Mail

"Trams had a long and proud history. The first were simple horse-drawn affairs, starting in 1885. Electric trams began in 1897 and the council took over control of the service from a trams trust in 1925. More than 160 million people were carried in the peak year, 1944-45, when women served as conductors. Models such as the Drop Centre, Toast Rack and Dreadnought came and went. Other models were dubbed the 'coffin', 'funeral', 'summer' and advertising tram (the latter carrying billboards). One four-wheeled design was known as the Jumping Jack because mischievous youths would bounce up and down at the back, lifting the front wheels off the tracks."

Ref: Brendan O'Malley, Courier Mail, 13/4/09

"Jones's many admirers depict him as a hero on a national scale. ... His critics say he was dictatorial and arrogant, even insulting. King Clem was the knocking nickname they gave him for his

insistence on doing everything his way. ... He built underground car parks in the CBD and developed parklands, sporting fields and swimming pools in the suburbs, as well as the Brisbane Botanic Gardens at Mount

Coot-tha in the city's west. Jones also oversaw the controversial demise of

Brisbane's much-loved trams. He championed the rights of Brisbane motorists to drive unhindered by those relics of another age. The Paddington depot fire of 1962 ... was the catalyst. In 1969 he rode Tram 554, one of those rebuilt from pieces salvaged from the fire, on its final run."

Ref: Peter Hansen and Steve Connolly, Courier Mail, 16/12/07

"The removal of the trams is probably one of the few errors of judgement made by Mr Jones. Perhaps you can car pool together to reduce the impact you both have on the traffic problem?"

Ref: 'Mark', Brisbane Times, 7/8/08

And Also ...

"Hundreds of passengers were ordered off a plane in Canada moments before it was due to take off after a huge rat was discovered on board ... in an overhead locker." **Ref: MX, 1/3/10**

The Hiawatha Light Rail Line (Part 2)

"It was the coinciding of three Minnesota politicians that made the state's first light rail a reality after 30 years of setbacks. Even after the Hiawatha Line had been approved, Hiawatha seemed a lost cause to the Met Council; it was set to be a lower-budget bus route instead of light rail. Then, in the early 2000s, Hennepin County commissioner Peter McLaughlin and Congressman Martin Sabo appeared as the angels of Twin Cities public transit, working to get federal funding for the surplus costs required to make Hiawatha a light rail. These funds required a match in the state's own budget. The third key player, then-Gov. Jesse Ventura, threatened a blanket veto of the state budget if local funding for the light rail wasn't matched."

Ref: James Nord & Katherine Lymn, The Minnesota Daily, 10/3/10

More on Very Fast Trains

"Robyn Williams: When you come to the two measures of carbon emissions, Greenhouse Gases and sheer energy use, how do planes vs very fast trains stack up? Is there a considerable saving with trains?"

David George: Trains have got an extremely good record in terms of emissions and in terms of low fuel use. In the European context, for example, the passenger kilometres for one kilowatt of energy for high speed rail is 170, for buses 55, for private cars 30; and for planes it's 20; so rail is streets ahead in that context. ... The impact of high speed rail – which is driven by electricity and therefore can use renewable fuel – can be immense in terms of fuel usage and in terms of reduction in transport emissions."

Ref: Science Show, ABC Radio National, 21/3/10

www.abc.net.au/rn/scienceshow/stories/2010/2850932.htm

Perth Railway to Sink

"The Commonwealth and State Governments are moving ahead with the landmark Perth City Link project to sink the railway line and Wellington Street Bus Station and to develop the heart of Perth. ... The Perth City Link project [will] completely transform the way that many people use and interact with public amenities and public spaces in the centre of Perth. [Without projects like this] urban congestion will be costing the City's families and businesses some \$2.1 billion a year by the end of the decade. Based on a start time of early next year, the sinking of the line is expected to be completed by 2014."

Ref: Joint Federal/State Media Release, 29/4/10

Resurrecting the Corridor Light Rail

"Upon its completion in 2014, the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit line will reconnect the Twin Cities in a way that has been missing for 60 years. ... The landscape of the main campus artery, Washington Avenue Southeast, will be transformed from a clogged street to a sleek transit mall from Pleasant to Walnut streets. For this stretch, auto traffic will be limited to emergency vehicles. Pedestrians, bikes, buses and trains will rule the mall. The US\$957 million, 11-mile conduit between St. Paul & Minneapolis is scheduled to begin heavy construction this year, but the idea of a new rapid transit system has been debated since the 1970s. Proposed to run along the defunct tracks of a streetcar line demolished in the 1950s, planning of the corridor didn't gain serious momentum until 2001. 'The fact is, we're not trying to site a nuclear reactor, we're siting a tremendous transportation amenity' Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak said. ...

"In the early 20th century, Thomas Lowry left an indelible impression on the city's transit. Lowry came to the cities in 1867 as a lawyer looking to invest in valuable real estate. Instead, he created it. Today's era of public transit succeeded the robust Twin Cities train culture of the streetcar age, which peaked in the 1920s and 1930s. Lowry served as president of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company up to and during the golden age of streetcars. The company's earliest projects were symbolic: four 'inter-urban' lines connecting the two cities constructed and in operation by 1910. Minnesota Historical Society curator Matthew Anderson said streetcar lines stretching out from the cities brought corridors of development, which later slowly filled in between. 'The cities kind of took the shape that they have today because of the streetcars', Anderson said.

"The main inter-urban line along University Avenue, almost identical in layout to the planned light rail, was the main thoroughfare and created the Midway district. In fact, the district got its name from being the first 'way' between the two cities via public transit. Some areas where popular streetcar lines crossed became retail districts that still exist today. As commuters waited for their next train, they had 'time to kill and money to spend', Anderson said. After the line's popularity peaked in 1920, the Great Depression's far-reaching slump dragged ridership down with it, according to Anderson's research. ... In its peak year, 1920, the Twin City Rapid Transit Company sold 238 million tickets. By 1954, ridership had dropped to less than 5 million, according to Anderson's research. That was the year the last streetcar ran."

Ref: James Nord & Katherine Lymn, The Minnesota Daily, 10/3/10

The Tragedy of Suburbia (Part 3)

"We are fortunate that the New Urbanists were there for the last ten years excavating all that information that was thrown in the garbage by our parent's generation after WW2 because we are going to need it if we are going to reconstruct towns. We are going to get back this body of methodology, and principle, and skill in order to learn how to compose meaningful places. Places that are integral, that are living organisms in the sense that they contain all the organs of our civic life and our communal life deployed in an integral fashion – so that the residences make sense, deployed in relationship to the places of business, of culture and of governance. We are going to have to learn what the building blocks of these things are, the street, the block, how to compose public spaces – large and small – the courtyard, the civic square, and how to really make use of this property.

"We can see some of the first ideas for retrofitting some of the catastrophic property that we have in America – the dead [shopping] malls – what are we going to do with them? In point of fact most of them are not going to make it. They're not going to be retrofitted. They're going to be the salvage yards of the future. Some of them we are going to fix though, and we are going to fix them by imposing back on them the street and block systems and by returning to the building block as the normal increment of development. And if we are lucky the result will be revitalised town centres and neighbourhood centres in our existing towns and centres. ...

"We've got a lot of work to do. We are not going to be rescued by the 'hyper-car', we are not going to be rescued by alternative fuel – no amount or combination of alternative fuels is going to allow us to continue running what we are running the way we are running it. We are going to have to do everything very differently – and America is not prepared, we are sleepwalking into the future, we're not ready for what's coming at us.

"And so I urge you all to do what you can. Life in the mid 21st century is going to be about living locally. Be prepared to be good neighbours, be prepared to find vocations that make you useful to your neighbours and you fellow citizens. ... Please go out and do what you can to make this a land full of places that are worth caring about."

Ref: James Howard Kunstler, TED Talks, Monterey, California, February 2004

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1ZeXnmDZMQ&feature=player_embedded#

Sustainable Transit at the BBC

"Staff at BBC Worldwide have been banned from taking domestic and short-haul flights as part of one of the most wide-ranging green travel programmes yet attempted in the UK. Executives have been told they can only fly when travelling by train adds more than three hours to the journey. The edict, from the BBC's commercial arm, means that staff have to take the train to all domestic locations, as well as European cities as far afield as Strasbourg, Amsterdam and Bordeaux. In addition, they must formally explain why a meeting cannot be held using one of the company's five videoconferencing suites before they can book a long-haul flight. ... The company's environmental department also undertook a study of all journeys taken in the year prior to introducing the policy and found that switching to the train would save the organisation money. ... The [BBC has also] introduced parking charges in the staff car park to encourage greater use of public transport."

Ref: James Murray, Business Green, 2/10/09

Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 25)

SI: Back on the subject of trams, while you are putting them into Victoria Street they should also go into Russell Street. Again it would calm the traffic. It would mean that if you had parades (or any disruption) in Swanston Street you could divert all of the trams along Russell Street – one street up, and then if you wanted to, you could continue past Trades Hall, all the way down Lygon Street and join up with the #1 and #8 tram route. They do routine reconstruction maintenance on these tram tracks. What I would advocate is a five year plan to expand the inner urban tram system. When you repair [tram tracks at] selected intersections, put in cross-tracks. It would not add significantly to the cost. Later on, join up the intersections. It will be much less expensive because part of the infrastructure will be in place. But you have to have a plan. You have to have foresight. The Roads department have been doing it for years: building bits of freeway and then joining them up.

OK: I think it requires a quantum change ... If an option for trams is seriously considered then I think an option for bicycle lanes in Russell Street should also be seriously considered.

SI: The southern end of Russell Street is fairly steep. Cycling from south to north through the city I always preferred Elizabeth Street. I felt it was safer than Swanston Street.

OK: The Principal Bicycle Network, as I recall it, is Swanston Street focused, and I do wonder about that. {Continued in #156}

Louvain-la-Neuve

“Louvain-la-Neuve, an example of the ‘auto-mobile under’ type of New Pedestrianism, is a planned city in the municipality of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. ... The administration decided to create a new town to host the French-speaking university. The chosen site was situated 30 km southeast of Brussels, in the French-speaking part of Belgium. ... With the completion of university buildings & the ongoing residential development, the city experienced rapid growth, with 10,477 inhabitants recorded in 1981. The final goal is to reach 30,000 inhabitants, in addition to the 15,000 thousand students living in town during the academic year. ...

“The University was able to play an important role in the conception and planning of the town. They decided that city should not be only inhabited by students, but rather draw a diverse community as is found in any classic city. Moreover, one of the main points of the urban design of Louvain-la-Neuve was to make it people rather than automobile centred. As a consequence, the city centre is built on a gigantic concrete slab, with all motorized traffic travelling underground. This allows most of the ground level of the city centre to be car free. Most buildings are built on the slab (*la dalle*), and the pedestrian area is expanding even far from the city centre. The city is clustered around this centre in four districts: Biéreau, Lauzelle, Hocaille and Bruyères. A fifth district, Baraque, that was not planned by the University has expanded on the north side of the city. It is distinct from the rest of the city in the willingness of its inhabitants to live outside of the common architectural framework (small cobblestoned and pedestrian streets) used in the other parts of the city.” **Ref: Wikipedia**
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvain-la-Neuve>



Louvain-la-Neuve

“Pierre Laconte was one of the three partners of the Groupe Urbanisme-Architecture, created in 1968 by the Catholic University of Louvain to produce the Master plan of a new university town, near Brussels (adopted in 1970), and coordinate its implementation. This new university town, called Louvain-la-Neuve, was built along the model of traditional European university towns. It received the Abercrombie Award 1982 of the International Union of Architects (UIA).”

Ref: Bio for Pierre Laconte

TOD and Property Values

“The development of successful TODs [Transport Orientated Developments] often encounters several barriers. These barriers include: a lack of inter-jurisdictional cooperation, auto-oriented design that favours park and ride lot over ridership generating uses, and community opposition. The community opposition may be more vocal in suburban areas where residents of predominately single-family neighbourhoods may feel that the proposed high-density, mixed-use TOD will bring noise, air pollution, increased congestion and crime into their area. Community opposition has been instrumental in stopping many TOD projects in the San Francisco Bay Area.

“While community opposition to TODs [in the US] has been pronounced, very little empirical research exists that indicates whether this opposition is well-founded. Economic theory suggests that if a TOD has a negative effect on the surrounding residential neighbourhoods, then that effect should lower land prices and in turn, the housing prices in these neighbourhoods. Similarly, an increase in the housing prices would mean a positive effect of TODs on the surrounding neighbourhoods. This study empirically estimates the impact of four San Francisco Bay Area suburban TODs on single-family home sale prices. The study finds that the case study suburban TODs either had no impact or had a positive impact on the surrounding single-family home sale prices.” **Ref: Effect of Suburban Transit Oriented Developments on Residential Property Values, Mineta Transportation Institute, June 2009** See full report at:
<http://www.transweb.sjsu.edu/MTportal/research/publications/documents/Effects%20of%20Sub-Urban%20Transit%20%28with%20Cover%29.pdf>

Liquid Natural Gas for Heavy Vehicles

“A contract between BOC Limited and APA Group ... will see the provision of up to 100 tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) a day for the heavy transport sector. The expansion of the companies’ existing contract will bring the east coast of Australia closer to having a chain of LNG re-fuelling stations for trucks that have been converted to use gas. Trials have shown that the best natural gas vehicle technology burns gas cleanly and efficiently. Using LNG for heavy transport can also reduce costs when diesel prices are high. LNG is coming of age as a transport fuel, providing a clean and cost-competitive alternative to diesel.”

Ref: Federal Ministerial Media Release, 6/5/10