

Road Toll Solution

“Roads Minister, Tim Pallas, is commendably in public discussions on the state's increasing road deaths. At the same time, he is also busily planning to attract more trucks and cars onto our roads via freeways at Sunshine, Footscray, the Mornington Peninsula, Werribee north, and from Clifton Hill to the Yarra. Internationally, passenger and freight trains are responsible for less than 5% of roads death and injuries (per person or tonne carried), compared with trucks and cars. Regular trains to Doncaster, Monash, and Rowville, with some links to Box Hill, Dandenong, and other Central Activity Centres could reduce the road toll by 50% in a few years.” Ref: **Brian Buckley, The Age 2/6/10**

Trams to Return to Auckland

“Trams are being prepared for a comeback on Auckland's waterfront, in time for next year's Rugby World Cup. More than 50 years since trams disappeared from city streets, the Auckland Regional Council has approved the first stage of a proposal which could ultimately be part of the region's wider public transport network. ... The waterfront trams ... are likely to be converted to battery-powered drives to avoid a need for overhead powerlines which could hamper trucks carrying boats with masts. ... Sea+City chief executive John Dalzell said the trams would be charged overnight at sidings at the western end of Jellicoe St, although they would gain some recharging during daily operations through harnessing some of their own momentum. Mr Dalzell said Jellicoe St was already being dug up to make it a pedestrian-oriented boulevard, so tram tracks would be laid as part of that project. Regional council chairman Mike Lee ... called the removal of trams from the streets in 1956 a 'terrible mistake' which he hoped could be rectified and said he was pleased by Sea+City's enthusiasm for the project. The focus would be on carrying visitors around Wynyard Quarter in heritage trams but he expected that as the area became more developed with businesses and apartments, demand would grow for modern light rail vehicles to cater for commuters.”

Ref: **Mathew Dearnaley, NZ Herald, 3/6/10**

And Also ...

“A rearguard attempt to scuttle Washington DC's embryonic modern streetcar system was frustrated by social networking media [which] played a key role in local politics at the District of Columbia in forcing the City Council to restore funding for the modern streetcar project after it had been eliminated.” Ref: **Trans-Action. 8/6/10**

Car Park to Bike Park

“The Delaware Valley Green Building Council (DVGBC) hosted its sixth annual sustainable design competition. The competition encourages college and university students and young professionals to partner around an applied learning experience that focuses on sustainable design. With sustainable transportation at the forefront of Philadelphia's current urban issues, the competition challenged participants to design a sustainable bicycle transit centre.” The winner of the competition was architect Annie Scheel, who proposed a bike garage [see below] on an existing car parking lot in central Philadelphia. There would be spaces for over 690 bikes as well as facilities like showers.

Ref: **DVGC website, 2010** See details at:

<http://dv gbc.org/content/2010-sustainable-design-competition-results>



Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 29)

OK: I'm a fan of taxi use. My elderly mother has had her quality of life improved no end because she was able to get taxis in and out of the city from Cheltenham. But if she wanted to get off the train and get a taxi from Cheltenham Railway Station, it was an impossibility. If she tried to book the taxi: almost an impossibility, because the taxi driver wanted a collection point. The taxi driver would not pick her up outside the railway station, because that's not a booking point. So I told my mother to go to the [nearby] milk bar, and they will pick you up from the milk bar but they refused that as well.

SI: So they want a street address?

OK: That's my observation. Now that may not be the official rule but that's what it is in practice. And there are reasons for that. If you watch you can see drivers pinching other bookings, so if you have somebody waiting for you on a street corner, that person like my mother, would just pick up the next taxi, and they [the taxi drivers] probably hear who is being booked anyway. I don't know all of the machinations but it's understandable: if you are taxi driver in gridlock and you have to pick up a person on a street corner, you are going to go somewhere else where it is easier.

SI: At certain times of the day and night the taxis themselves start causing gridlocks. Early one evening recently, while waiting for my tram at the Federation Square tram stop, I noticed that there was a veritable traffic jam caused by mostly empty taxis (and a few private cars) heading north into the CBD over Princess Bridge. Meantime nine in ten taxis heading south along the same road were without a fare. The market doesn't always know best. Apart from the problems of congestion and wasted time, there are also issues of pollution and wasted fuel. Perhaps we should be thinking about improving public transport and using those taxis more appropriately?

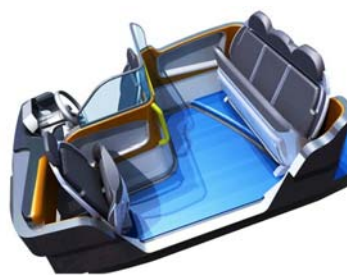
OK: I think that there should be a hybrid system. There is a good arrangement between carshare use and public transport; I think that that model could be used with taxis and public transport. They should be able to ring up the taxi service from the bus or the tram and say: I'll meet you at the bus or tram stop.

SI: Most people have mobile phones ...

OK: ... but you will find that there are institutional or cultural inertia constraints that prevent it from happening.

New York Taxi UniCab (Part 2)

"The UniCab has four seats with the front being a rearward-facing chair, which is meant to stimulate conversation between the passengers. If you do sit in that seat, though, you miss out on seeing what's on the infotainment screen positioned on the safety shell that surrounds the driver. If four seats isn't enough, there's also the Maxi-Taxi equivalent, a long-wheelbase version that is designed to seat six passengers as well as cart a boot-load of luggage." **Ref: Matt Campbell, The Age, 1/6/10**



"Design looks interesting, and I can only presume it was all too difficult for our taxi regulators to implement. A fancy design won't increase the supply of taxis onto Melbourne roads, only root and branch reform of the silly taxi plate system will do that. But Brumby is hardly known for his courage to take on vested interests is he?"

Comments, The Age, 2/6/10

"As per usual, the people who will drive the thing were obviously not consulted or were ignored. Taxi drivers spend a lot of time reversing out of unfamiliar driveways or backing up to an address they have overshot. The rear window on this otherwise interesting car is ridiculously small and would make low lying objects (fences, markers, children) impossible to see. Rear view cameras are an expense that operators will balk

at. And as every professional driver knows, using the rear view mirrors is a sure way to kill anyone crossing your rearward trajectory."

The Age, Comments, 2/6/10

New York Taxi UniCab
Photos: The Age
www.drive.com.au/Editorial/ArticleDetail.aspx?ArticleID=61506

End of the US Favouring the Auto

“United States Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has announced that federal transportation policies will no longer favour ‘motorized’ transportation, such as cars and trucks, over ‘non-motorized’ transportation, such as walking and bicycling. LaHood signed the new policy directive on March 11, the same day he attended a congressional reception for the National Bike Summit. ... ‘Today, I want to announce a sea change’, LaHood wrote. ... ‘This is the end of favouring motorized transportation at the expense of non-motorized.’

LaHood’s policy statement not only called for this change to take place in programs funded by the federal government, but also said the federal government would ‘encourage’ state and local governments to do the same in their own programs. ‘The establishment of well-connected walking and bicycling networks is an important component for liveable communities, and their design should be a part of Federal-aid project developments’, said LaHood’s policy statement. ‘Because of the benefits they provide, transportation agencies should give the same priority to walking and bicycling as is given to other transportation modes’. ... LaHood’s policy statement envisions the development of a transportation system in which people walk and bike for short distances and rely on mass transit for longer trips. ‘The primary goal of a transportation system is to safely and efficiently move people and goods’.

Ref: Terence Jeffrey, CNS News, 24/3/10

“Increased commitment to and investment in bicycle facilities and walking networks can help meet goals for cleaner, healthier air; less congested roadways; and more liveable, safe, cost-efficient communities. Walking and bicycling provide low-cost mobility options that place fewer demands on local roads and highways. DOT recognizes that safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities may look different depending on the context – appropriate facilities in a rural community may be different from a dense, urban area. However, regardless of regional, climate, and population density differences, it is important that pedestrian and bicycle facilities be integrated into transportation systems. While DOT leads the effort to provide safe and convenient accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists, success will ultimately depend on transportation agencies across the country embracing and implementing this policy.” **Ref:**

Ray LaHood, US DoT Media Release, 11/3/10
<http://www.dot.gov/affairs/2010/bicycle-ped.html>

The New Zealand Jetpack

*“**Fran Kelly:** I’m still wrestling with the mental picture – a petrol-powered jetpack ... it’s like you are strapped to a rocket or something ...*

*“**Glen Martin** (inventor of the jetpack): Yeah, pretty much. ... It’s the smallest vertical take-off aircraft in the world, it’s a tenth the size of owning a personal helicopter, it’s something that you can park in your garage and you can take off from your backyard ...*

*“**FK:** How high can it fly and how fast can it go?*

*“**GM:** It can go up to about 8,000 feet, it depends a little bit on pilot weight and conditions ... and it can go up to about 100 km/hr. An average pilot can fly for about half an hour which is nearly 100 times longer than the old technology ... that could only fly for about 25 seconds.*

*“**FK:** ... this is a commuter vehicle? ...*

*“**GM:** I never invented it as a commuter vehicle. I invented it as a recreational vehicle ... [but] now we have been approached by ... emergency services people about using it for other things as well. From fire people wanting to fly to the top of a building to ... search-and-rescue [teams] ... you know that there has been a few earthquakes lately and then suddenly you can’t get your trucks over roads because they are all broken into rubble, and in some cases you can’t even get helicopters in. [With] these [jetpacks] you can fly in, and land in literally the space of a car park. They are very easy to fly ... an emergency service responder could actually learn to fly in a day. ...*

*“**FK:** Perhaps it has some inbuilt limiters? ... Price at US\$100,000 ... but also ... it’s quite noisy ...*

*“**GM:** ... Our one is basically 200 horse power. The old Bell Rocket was 1000 horse power so our thing is about 60 decibels less noisy ... still not something that you are going to sneak up behind somebody ... it’s in the same [noise]regulations as a motorbike ...*

*“**FK:** And what about safety Glen?*

*“**GM:** ... We are very conscience of safety - we think that this will eventually be the safest aircraft that you can buy. It has some features around it that no other vertical take-off aircraft has, for instance it has a ballistic parachute, which is sort of like an air-bag technology so that if something goes wrong, you press the big red button and within half a second a parachute appears above you and you come down under the parachute. It also has in-built roll cages, crumple-zones and all sorts of other safety features built into it as well. ... The idea of the jetpack has been out since 1926 ... we’ve got some unique patented technology ... as to when [ours] are going to be out there, well in Christchurch they are out there now ...”*

Ref: Breakfast. ABC Radio National, 15/3/10

www.abc.net.au/rn/breakfast/stories/2010/2845495.htm

More on the BBC

"The BBC has spent tens of thousands of dollars on a new lift for its World Cup Studio to save its presenters from having to climb three flights of stairs."

Ref: Mx News, 7/6,10



More on CNG

"General Motors Co. will offer Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Liquefied

Petroleum Gas (LPG) powered versions of the Chevrolet Express and GMC Savana full-size vans to fleet and commercial customers beginning later this year. ... 'We're listening to our fleet customers and dealers about offering options that help them achieve their business objectives', said Brian Small, general manager of GM's fleet and commercial operations. 'The industry commitment to expand the CNG and LPG infrastructure in key fleet markets was an enabler to allowing us to introduce these options now'." Ref NGV Global News, 18/5/10

"This is good news for the industry as it indicated a commitment from one of the big three to get back into the CNG market. It also opens opportunities for biogas producers and developers as transportation fuel is a high value market. Still remains to be seen when we will see the first GM OEM's in Canada. If Ford could bring back their vans and also put CNG on F150's the market can start to grow and CO2 emissions and costs can be reduced."

Ref IsCleaner, 25/5/10

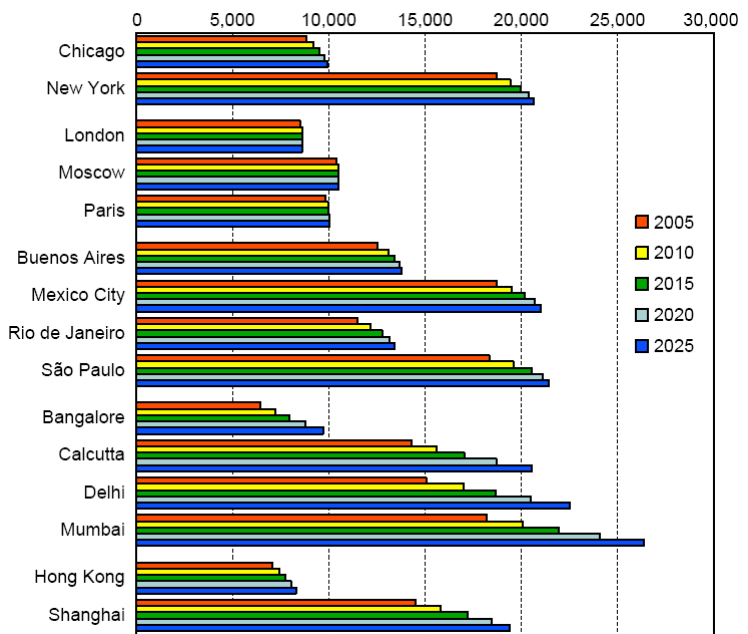
More on Real Time Bus Info

"The reality is that [the orange panels on bus stop posts – see #158] were actually installed primarily for the benefit of people with vision impairments who cannot read the timetables installed at the stops. Real time arrival information is not currently available for most of the metropolitan bus fleet. A project to install a bus tracking system on most buses in Melbourne is currently underway and will take a couple of years to complete. Once fully operational, real time information can then be provided to customers through a variety of channels."

Ref: Chris Loader, Bus Association Victoria, 9/6/10

The Future of Megacities (Part 1)

"On average, a person spends about 70 minutes per day travelling. This time budget is relatively constant over time and across countries. Consequently, wealthy people tend to travel faster and over longer distances. ... At the same time, urban population continues to expand, and the number of megacities – cities with over 10 million inhabitants – is expected to double within a generation. As cities grow and become richer, vehicle ownership and use tend to increase rapidly. This, in turn, has an influence on travel speed, congestion, and air pollution. ... In broad terms, movement to sustainable urban transportation involves accessibility and the generation of wealth by cost-effective and equitable means, while safeguarding health and minimizing the consumption of natural resources and the emission of pollutants. Frequently, this has been feasible with wide use of public transportation in general, and rapid rail transportation in particular. For example, there are cities such as Tokyo and Hong Kong that invested in public transport to provide extensive, high-quality, public transport systems before private vehicle ownership was high. In these cities, bus travel was at a high level until rapid mass transit was built and became affordable. ...



Population (in thousands) for examined areas

"Demand for personal transportation is influenced by a variety of factors. Size of the population (for absolute demand) and wealth of the population (for both absolute demand and per population demand) play vital roles ..."

{Continued in #160}
Ref: University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, February 2010 See: <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/65001/1/102514.pdf>

Tearing Down Motorways (Part 1)

“One [way of] reducing traffic congestion [is] by eliminating roads. Though our transportation planners still operate from the orthodoxy that the best way to untangle traffic is to build more roads, doing so actually proves counter-productive in some cases. There is even a mathematical theorem to explain why: ‘The Braess Paradox’ established that the addition of extra capacity to a road network often results in increased congestion and longer travel times. The reason has to do with the complex effects of individual drivers all trying to optimise their routes. The Braess paradox is not just an arcane bit of theory either – it plays frequently in real world situation. Likewise, there is the phenomenon of induced demand – or the ‘if you build it, they will come’ effect. In short, fancy new roads encourage people to drive more miles, as well as seeding new sprawl-style development that shifts new users onto them. Of course, improving congestion is not the main reason why a city would want to knock down a poorly planned highway – the reasons for that are plentiful, and might include improving citizen health, restoring the local environment, and energizing the regional economy. More efficient traffic flow is just a wonderful side benefit. Sound dubious? Here are several examples of how three cities (and their drivers) have fared better after highways that should never have been built in the first place were taken down.

In 2002, Mayor Lee Myung Bak pledged to renew South Korea’s capital Seoul by eliminating a 1970s-era highway that literally represented a paving over of the Cheonggyecheon River. His radical plan replacing it not with another road, but with a restored stream along the old riverbed. The immediate result of the intervention was a beautiful new 1000-acre park in the centre of the city, lower pollution, cooler temperatures city-wide. What wasn’t expected, however, was the city’s reduced traffic volumes. After all, the road

carried 160,000 cars a day before it was closed. But the highway’s closing was enough to convince thousands of people to drive less, or change their habits, as the city offered better public transportation options. {Cont. #160} Ref: **Yonah Freemark & Jebediah Reed, The Infrastructurist, 6/7/09** www.infrastructurist.com/2009/07/06/huh-4-cases-of-how-tearing-down-a-highway-can-relieve-traffic-jams-and-help-save-a-city/

Heart and Soul of the City (Part 1)

“One year ago this month, several million people headed to a park in the centre of Seoul, the capital of South Korea and seventh largest city in the world. They didn’t go for a rock festival, a football match or a political gathering, but mostly to just marvel at the surroundings, to get some fresh air and to paddle in the river that runs through it. But this was no ordinary park or river. The very old people of Seoul still remember how, more than 50 years ago, the river Cheonggyecheon was a wide but shallow seasonal stream that traditionally divided the city between the rich in the north and the poor in the south. It was where people went to wash clothes and where kids went to play, but as Seoul grew from being semi-rural to a vast, smog-bound east Asian metropolis, the Cheonggyecheon - which means ‘clear valley stream’ - became little more than a sewer.

“By 1970, the riverside had become slums, and the water progressively more polluted, having been first canalised and then concreted over. As

cars took over the city, the river bed was turned into a road, and then an elevated six-lane motorway was built above it. It was one of the most comprehensive obliterations of the natural environment ever perpetrated. But in a revolutionary act of ecological restoration that is now being examined around the world, the city of Seoul, under the leadership of the then mayor, Lee Myung Bak, pledged in 2002 to restore the river, tear down the motorway and create a five-mile long, 800-yard wide, 1,000-acre lateral park snaking through the city where the river once ran.” {Cont. #160} Ref: **John Vidal, Guardian, 1/11/06**



Before and After Case 1:
Seoul, South Korea
Cheonggyecheon Highway



And Also ... A Parable

“And after the time of the exodus from the Great Rift Valley, the Uprights came to roam new parts of the earth and ... These ways did so favour the Uprights that they came to divide all the face of the earth into their nations. And in the nations, the settled places grew and multiplied and in the many tongues of the Upright Ones the settled places were called by the names of cities. And in the cities there came among the money-keepers some professionals who called themselves economists. And though their name was born of the same word, they knew nothing of ecology, for they moved only among their own kind and knew little of the numberless things of the earth and the waters, which had not been measured by money. So they knew not that ecology was the mother of economy and in this way did they treat their mother shamefully, for the creed of the economists was eternal growth.

“The cities grew wondrous with the learning of the Uprights, who had come to set their thoughts on paper with machines for printing. And they gave themselves the name of Homo sapiens, Wise One, for they knew that only Uprights could be wise. And the Wise Ones learned to make use of oil that lay in the earth from the forests of times long past, even before the making of the Great Rift Valley, when the earth had been warm and the waters plentiful. And those nations with oil held in the earth beneath them did trade with it so that all nations might grow with its use. The dwellings and work-places came to be lit with shining globes, and notwithstanding their host of garments and fabrics, the Wise Ones kept their dwellings to their comfort with machines for keeping warm and machines for keeping cool. And they travelled swiftly over the land and waters, and above the clouds, with machines fed by the oil of the long-dead forests. And mighty were the industries for bringing food unto the cities and taking away the dung and other waste.

“Having begat all these marvels, the Wise Ones had become such creatures of the city that some saw the fields and plantations as wild places, and most knew nothing of the toil of growing their food, nor of the time long past when all had lived as one wild kind among others. Many of them grew fat and heavy for their limbs were little-used. But they conquered their sicknesses in ways ever more wondrous, and some had their failing bodies mended with parts from other beasts, even from swine, in the knowledge that all kinds of life had grown from one flesh. ‘Behold’ said the economists and the rulers, who were now of many kinds, ‘behold, it is the year we call second millennium and our numbers

have grown astoundingly, for we are now six-thousand-million Wise Ones. Our kind is in every quarter of the earth, and where there were forests we have made it into fields, and where there were wild beasts we have made that place for sheep and goats and cattle, and even the vastness of the oceans have we made into fishery. Let us rejoice,’ they cried, for in the thinking of the rulers and economists there could never be too many Wise Ones. And there was much rejoicing in the cities.

“But there were multitudes among and within the nations who grew thin because they were without machines, and even without food, and their numbers were great. And they who were in famine and had no machines, and cried out for help, and the rich among the nations of the Wise Ones gave their help but let it be known that without more growth their help could not be great, for the creed of the economists, even above all other creeds, was eternal growth. Yet even among the rich there had come a fear. Some who did not rejoice were troubled, for such was the use of the fruits of the earth, and such was the waste from that use, that the land was becoming barren and the vast oceans were being poisoned. The catch of the fishers was poor, and even the vapours of the heavens were not as they had been before, so the earth became warm. And among the young, some who were troubled made their trouble known unto others with music that was loud and angry.

“And among the many kinds of rulers were those who paid heed and were also troubled. ‘We must change our lighting globes’, said some, ‘and use smaller machines for our travel’. ‘We must make more use of the winds of the earth and the beams of the sun’, said others, ‘or the oil that lies in the earth will not be sufficient for our needs’. And the economists agreed that changes must be made in the ways of living so that growth could be eternal.”

Ref: Melvin Bolton, Ockham’s Razer, ABC

Radio National, 14/3/10 Full transcript:

www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2010/2844047.htm#transcript



A bird is mired in oil on the beach at East Grand Terre Island along the Louisiana coast

Photo: AP, The Age, 15/6/10