

Sustainable Cities Authority

We are starting to get some good discussion on the Sustainable Cities Authority proposal. One (fair) comment is that in Victoria we already have several agencies charged with delivering more sustainable outcomes including the Sustainability Commissioner, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Sustainability Victoria, VicUrban, Growth Areas Authority and sundry others. I certainly don't want to duplicate any of their good work.

The problem is that we are still not going far and fast enough. Perhaps there is insufficient co-ordination between these organisations and the various non-government stakeholders particularly when we include transport and tourism into the mix of urban design and the built form. It appears that each organisation is locked into its policies and programs, allowing very little room for innovative ideas. The result is pretty much a business-as-usual approach. The reality is that (in Victoria) we can't point to one truly sustainable new suburb in spite of having had much of the knowledge of how to successfully design and construct such suburbs at our fingertips for over ten years.

The real rationale, for a (semi) independent body, apart from starting afresh with a different agenda, is that it will be linked to similar bodies in other states and to a federal agency. More importantly, it will be a conduit for channelling federal funding for innovative sustainable projects including public transport. The States don't seem to be able to fund PT infrastructure at anywhere near the rate required.

The proposed SCA could very quickly (and in a very cost-effective manner) become a repository for existing knowledge, while at the same time seeking out and trialling the innovation solutions. Having established general guidelines with all the stakeholders – while still recognising new ideas and climatic variations – this information could be shared and dispersed without having to constantly duplicate the process. The importance being that we will need to very quickly start changing the way we design our cities, particularly at the urban fringes.

I am also keen for the SCA to be a conduit for Federal funding and to tackle those projects with a high degree of sustainability that are presently outside the resources of the State Governments or simply not on their agenda – perhaps because of infrastructure cost. This will obviously vary from State to State, but for Victoria examples

might be adequate public transport on suburban fringe developments or ferries on Port Phillip Bay. (Incidentally some of Sydney's ferries were funded under a Federal program).



It has been valuable to build up a critical mass of sustainable buildings (eg 60L, 40A, CH2) - likewise we will need to demonstrate working sustainable communities complete with viable sustainable transport systems.

I am intending to keep the Sustainable Cities Authority proposal on the table for comment until the middle of this year. We would therefore continue to welcome your feedback.

The next step will be to decide if and how to proceed and how to implement it nationally. Should it form part of existing organisations or should it be entirely independent? The proposed SCA would work closely with all the agencies charged with delivering sustainability. There is too much to do to waste time in duplication.

Presentation

The next presentation on sustainable cities based around sustainable transport systems will be at **Doncaster on Thursday March 29**, 6.15pm in the Council Chambers, Manningham Civic Offices 699 Doncaster Road (RSVP to Kay 9840 9348)

- o Please let me know if you would like a presentation to your organisation.

SCA Feedback

"Thank you for your news - very welcome and appreciate the advice. It would certainly be good to work together on these issues as the Metropolitan Transport Forum has the same goal and has agreed to work with the Municipal Association of Victoria to lobby for Federal funding of PT and changes to tax provisions which discriminate in favour of car use vis a vis PT."

Cr Jackie M Fristacky

Councillor for Nicholls Ward, City of Yarra

Correction

In the last newsletter (#15) I mentioned that nobody was waiting at the bus stops where the bus route duplicated the #48 Balwyn North tram. Apparently through a contractual agreement those stops are 'set down only'. Is this the best outcome for the commuters? Should we be encouraging competition or co-operation?

Congratulations

Congratulations to the State Government for merging Zones 2 & 3. It always seemed strange to distinguish between 2 & 3 on distance rather than the service provided. Zone 1, with trams, at least has the basis of a good PT system.

Congratulations to the City of Melbourne for their work on new bike paths.



The new 'Copenhagen' bike path in Swanton St. The cars now park away from the curb. I've also noticed an increase in cyclists in the cross street (Queensbury) where clearly defined bike paths have been created in lieu of a lane of traffic. (All we need now in Queensbury St is a tram).

Comment

It was disappointing to see the Victorian Road Minister's 'staunch defence of cars': "My job as minister for roads is to fix congestion, not cause it. I won't be supporting any reduction of (car) access into the city in order to provide for a bicycle lane" in St Kilda Road. The minister also said: "People have a right to drive their cars, and to do it without being impeded..." [Age 3-3-07]. This presents a paradox because cars mostly impede cars and are the principle cause of congestion. And yet cars do so much more, and not just through greenhouse gases, noise, road rage and accidents. The private car has shaped our cities in a very negative way through loss of amenity, through space provided for roads and parking, and through loss of permeable surfaces (thanks to bitumen and concrete). Worse still, our outer suburbs are all but dependent on the motor car and the consequences of that are social isolation and an increase in obesity.

If we are serious about sustainability, the media and governments must send the right signals to the community. We have published an article on this subject: **Sending the Right Message on Sustainability** in Transport Extra #3, see: www.goingsolar.com.au/transport

Traffic Congestion

"The cause of traffic congestion in Melbourne is certainly not inadequate road infrastructure, since Melbourne was found to have the greatest length of road per capita (9.53 metres), in a recent study of 14 of the world's most liveable cities. If used more efficiently, the current road network has adequate capacity to deal with projected future growth in travel demand."

It is widely accepted that attempts to tackle road congestion by increasing capacity have failed, due to the problem of induced demand. If the government is to be successful in meeting its 20-2020 target (20% of all motorised trips by public transport by the year 2020) then there can be no future increases in car use.

The barriers to adequately tackling congestion in Melbourne are largely political. These underlying institutional problems have been one of the factors driving Melbourne's program of freeway expansion, which Graeme Davison describes as 'the most expansive and expensive freeway experiment in Australian history.' This is hampering growth in public transport patronage, promoting unsustainable travel behaviour and contributing to congestion.

A moratorium on new or extended urban freeways, tollways and major road capacity increases, with the money saved diverted to sustainable transport modes, would halt this negative trend."

"...the Government commissioned an inquiry into transport congestion by the Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission. The inquiry report showed that building more roads just creates more congestion by encouraging more people to drive."

Ref: Environment Victoria www.envict.org.au



It speaks for itself. (Photographer unknown)

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