

Car Emissions in South-East Qld

“SE Queensland could be shrouded in vehicle smog unless the region's transport woes are fixed, a new report warns. A study from the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council says greenhouse gas emissions from transport are on track to skyrocket 75% within 30 years – worse than in Melbourne. ... In the [Queensland] southeast, worsening congestion will also force motorists to travel further, longer and far slower as the region becomes more transport intensive and the population grows. Estimates in the report, which was released yesterday, show the number of trips taken in the southeast will almost double to 27 million by 2041 and travelling time will jump by 130%. ‘People living in the region are projected to require more transport to get to work, school, university, or to go to the shops, visit friends and family or any or undertake many of the other journeys needed in life’, it says.

“The report also predicts there will not be a fundamental shift in the way we travel, despite plans for major investments in busways and

investigations into metro and light rail. Public transport use projected to remain constant at 4% by 2041 and private vehicle use decrease just one point, to 77%. State and local governments are pumping millions into public transport already, with Brisbane City Council planning to buy 125 new buses every year and have 19 CityCats on the water by 2012. The ASBEC says smarter urban planning and reducing the need for mobility in cities will be the key to reducing car dependency and green house gas emissions. Both City Hall and the State Government have outlined plans it's hoped can decentralise growth, including shifting some government departments outside the CBD and building homes around transport nodes. ... ‘In 2041, SE Queenslanders will spend 3.3 million hours more travelling than they spent in 2006’, the report says. ‘This 130% increase in travelling time is greater than population and employment growth (81% and 107%, respectively).’”

Ref: Emma Chalmers, Courier Mail, 24/2/10



Pass Mark for Melbourne Docklands?

“Melbourne lord mayor Robert Doyle said ... ‘We've got to make sure that Docklands is connected to the city, and giving us planning control, making us the responsible authority, will in fact enhance that’ ... [and] Kim Dovey, a professor of architecture and urban design at Melbourne University, said the transfer of planning authority was an encouraging step. ‘[But, Docklands] was never conceived with public interest to the fore’, Professor Dovey said. ‘It was an experiment in privatisation of urban planning and I think that the recognition that that has to be redressed is a good one’. But he added that there was no easy fix for major planning mistakes such as building Wurundjeri Way, which severed the precinct from the city centre, and allowing developers to construct skyscrapers with ‘black holes and blank walls’ at ground level rather than shopfronts. ‘They're a bit up against it in terms of trying to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted’, he said.” **Ref: Adam Carey, The Age, 8/7/10**

A few days before the above article was published, I walked (with a principal urban designer) from Carlton to Docklands. It became evident that the road artery, Wurundjeri Way, was a major problem, partly because it was feeding the massive car parking stations that dominate the site – over 4,100 undercover sites for visitors and workers. Our destination was Harbour Town Shopping Centre, and to be fair, it was better than expected – something of a cross between a series of malls in a regional town and a country showground – but better than expected. The good news is that the site is reasonably well connected by tram (including the city circle tram which now has a spur line) and there's a bike share station not far away.

Meantime, on Wednesday July 7, at the Melbourne Transport Forum, the presentations were on the Central Activities Districts of Melbourne (being Box Hill, Footscray, Broadmeadows, Frankston, Ringwood and Dandenong). While there is much to be commended in the work being done at the local and state government levels, I noted a few concerns: generally a lack of emphasis on real sustainable buildings; an ingrained determination to encourage car parking; generally (with the exception of Footscray) a dependence on diesel buses for public transport connections to the heavy rail; and the failure to realise the advantage of connected urban villages which in turn would connect to these Central Activities Districts. See: www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenpl.nsf/LinkView/7EF2CA1E91EB87C3CA256D480003CEFFCB3A095B12F1DCC1CA256D190029AA6B

More on Fast Trains

"The building of a fast rail link Melbourne-Canberra-Sydney is one of those things that is so blindingly obvious that it should be done. Rail has a huge advantage over other forms of transport as the major railway stations which would form the backbone of this network already exist in the centre of big cities, as opposed to airports which are miles from the city. Certainly, having experienced travel around Europe, rapid rail is just the way to go... I find it amusing that the projected cost is approximately what the 'tax cuts' budgeted in the previous election campaign totalled. I would happily see the equivalent of a cup of coffee at a cafe a week taken from me and invested into worthwhile projects like this. This is called 'Nation Building' folks."

Ref: 'Dave', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

"I would do almost anything not to have to go out to Tullamarine, pay a cabbie the best part of \$100 and wait around in airports for hours on end. Fast rail will change this country immeasurably for the better. Reinvigorate rural areas, which will now be 'closer' to capitals, making them a more attractive option, particularly as populations increase and housing costs go up too. Money will be recouped in tourism if rail travel is made competitive with air travel, all winter loads of football supporters will go city to city with their families not to mention those just wanting to shop elsewhere for the weekend or visit family and friends."

Ref: 'Kate', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

The oil age will eventually come to an end, and I believe we need to start preparing for that now by building a high speed passenger rail network between all our state capitals, and then on to our major regional centres.

Ref: 'Mark', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

*Any infrastructure-building is costly, but the benefits of fast rail are wide and far reaching, with fewer costs down the track. Traveling by rail is safer than driving and has less impact on the planet for sure, but it is also so civilised, being more relaxing than being in the road rage conditions that are familiar to many of us. Taking long distance rail in Japan, I was struck by how pleasant the experience was, despite the population density. **Ref: Alex Hallett, Comments, The Age, 23/4/10***

"It is sad that Japan first developed fast rail links in 1964 and in Australia 2010 we still don't have one...."

Ref: 'Peter', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

"While you're at it, how about a rail link between Melbourne's CBD and Tulla. The parking fees there are outrageous."

Ref: 'Kat', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

"Please spend the money on trains for the Western Suburbs who have had crappy train systems since the year dot. I stood at Newport station yesterday and watched 5 trains go by because they either didn't stop, weren't taking passengers or you could get on because it was akin to a cattle truck. The Myki system could have paid for more staff or/and better trains. We pay taxes for these things-it's our money and we pay it because we want good infrastructure, an efficient transport system and health care for everyone. Failing that, I'd just like to get a train that runs on time for a change."

Ref: 'Lola', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

"Travelling from city-centre to city-centre I suspect would suit the needs of many travellers and would be cost competitive with flying. And of course on a train you can walk around and not feel that you are travelling in a flying sardine can!"

Ref: 'Rich', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

Age Poll:

"Should we build a fast rail between Sydney and Melbourne?"

- Yes: 94%
- No: 6%
- Total votes: 12977"

Ref: The Age, 23/4/10

"What a no-brainer this idea is, except don't stop at passengers, add a high speed freight line and get half the trucks off the Hume Hwy too. Don't stop there, improve the urban and regional rail infrastructure as well. It costs money? So,

this is what taxation is for."

Ref: 'Michael', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

"Robust rail infrastructure should be a part of this nation's future for passenger and freight transport and we should [be] building now as oil will not become any cheaper and rail transport is energy efficient."

Ref: 'Mark', Comments, The Age, 23/4/10

And Also ...

"It is disappointing to see [Green's candidate] Adam Bandt enthusiastically espousing the non-solution of electric cars, ... Electric cars will do nothing to solve congestion, the road toll, the obesity epidemic or the alienation of our streets. Their mass adoption will require continued investment in freeways and parking stations. And they still require an energy source, so a lot of wind farms will be needed to lug all those tens of thousands of hefty batteries over the West Gate Bridge every Friday evening."

Ref: William Cawte, The Age, 11/7/10

Place Making

“What creates value in urban development? Does place create more value? How do we better realise this value?”

“First this concept of ‘place’ – this word that leaps scales to characterize a location from the room to a building, neighbourhood, city and nation. I want to begin by suggesting what a good urban place is not:

- *An urban place is not just a sensory phenomenon, not just something we look at.*
- *Good places are not closed and local: they are interconnected with other places; all places are global.*
- *Good places are not stable – they may be resilient and sustainable without remaining the same.*



Plaque on a seat in a public pause space

- *Good places not purified essences: the essential ingredient of good places is diversity of people, practices and built forms.*
- *Places are not things but assemblages of things - of people, trees, houses, trams, offices, trains, parks, cars, shops, streets – they are assemblages of the virtual and the actual - it is the relationships between these elements that really matters in place making.*
- *Urban places are not just physical – the thinking that sees people on one side and places on the other will reduce place to an item for consumption.*
- *a place is not a product to be produced and marketed, places are modes of production*

“So how does place produce urban value? We owe to the greatest of all urban thinkers, Jane Jacobs, the insight that good urban places, healthy cities are the engines of the economy. Places are productive – they produce goods and services and in an information economy they produce ideas, experiences, flows of money and accumulations of wealth. Good urban places produce what the economists call ‘ground rent’

“How to realize this value? Very carefully so as not to kill the value in the process. We also owe to Jacobs the understanding of how easily good places attract their own destruction. Places are the engines of wealth not resources for exploitation. We maximize this value when we understand better how places work, how they are seeded and grow and how they are killed.

Urban place making is largely a community process. There are many pessimists who think that democratic place making leads inevitably to either resistance to change or to a banal production of ‘gateways’ or window dressing. I rather suggest that the current cynicism and conservatism is a legacy of poor planning that dates from the 1990s. The task is to catch the public imagination for a better urban future and we have hardly begun.

“We realize this value when we put the public interest as the goal of our place making agenda, when we ensure a synergy of public and private interests. Place making is not a zero/sum game.

We realize this value when we understand the paradox that good places are at once monopolies and diverse markets: they are little monopolies in the best sense that good urban places are unique; everyone who lives here shares a monopoly on Melbourne. Yet good places embody diversity, they cannot be monopolized by singular interests

“I’m very pleased to see VicUrban and the State getting serious about this issue. Melbourne has been pretty good at enhancing the value of place in some parts of our city, the task now is to roll that out into the suburbs, the activity centres, the suburban campuses, the docks, the regional hubs, the train stations and along the tramlines. And in each case, the big challenge is to get and keep the community on board as we address the two big issues: population growth and climate change.”

Ref: Kim Dovey, speaking at the launch of Melbourne Place Making, Fed Sq, 20/4/10

“I’ve been thinking we need more places like the little space outside the Prahran Town Hall. I love how as a public building its set back a little more than the others, and sets itself off as somehow special. In so doing we get this urban square, with extra trees and places to sit. Now that to me is great place! Another good one is the side street next to the Grace Darling Hotel on Smith Street. It’s not huge but it does serve a huge function in green relief and public amenity along that street. I think these kinds of places are going to become increasingly important as Melbourne deals with a growing population who want to live in places of high amenity and services, without the burden of the car. These little spaces are also a great way to capitalise on the existing place attributes of an area. I don’t think great big streets are enough – we need great little spaces too!”

Ref: ‘Nigel’, Are Streets Place Enough? 20/4/10
www.melbourneplacemakingseries.com.au/2010/04/are-streets-place-enough/

Georges Pompidou Expressway (Pt 1)

"In 2001, some Parisian drivers were furious because their new mayor, Bertrand Delanoë, not only converted street lanes to transit lanes but also closed the Georges Pompidou Expressway to drivers for a month during the summer, as a centrepiece of his efforts to fulfil his campaign pledge to reduce automobile use. Drivers complained that, within a few months of being elected, Delanoë had caused so much congestion that traffic on the city's Boulevard St.-Germain backed up all the way to the Boulevard Périphérique. In 2002, rather than retreating, Delanoë converted this freeway on the Seine River to Paris-Plage (Paris Beach) for a month during the summer. He brought in sand, palm trees, a climbing wall, and ball courts. Parisians sunbathed by the Seine during the day, and strolled and listened to concerts there in the evening. Paris-Plage attracted 2,000,000 people during the summer of 2002. It was so popular that it has become a regular yearly event. It has also helped promote Delanoë's plans to reduce Paris's traffic dramatically and to close the Pompidou Expressway permanently.

"Georges Pompidou was Premier of France from 1962 to 1968, under the Presidency of Charles De Gaulle. In 1969, less than a year after losing the Premiership, he was elected to succeed De Gaulle as President, and he remained President until his death in 1974 at age 62. Pompidou was also a great lover of the automobile, and as Premier, he argued that a freeway should replace the grass-covered bank of the Seine by saying: 'les Français aiment leurs bagnoles' ('the French love their cars').

"On March 27, 1966, Paris made the decision that existing roadways along the Seine should be connected to create a continuous expressway along the Seine through the centre of Paris. The Voie Georges Pompidou (George Pompidou Expressway) was completed in 1967, and ran along the right bank of the Seine for 13 kms, connecting with the Boulevard Périphérique (Peripheral Boulevard) that circles central Paris at both ends. Fortunately, there was only room on the riverbank for a two-lane expressway. Pompidou wanted to cover the Seine with concrete to create room for a wider expressway, but the environmental movement and freeway revolt stopped any further freeway expansion in Paris.

"Bertrand Delanoë was elected mayor of Paris in March, 2001, after running on a platform that promised to support public transportation, walking, and bicycling at the expense of the

automobile. A conservative city government that supported more automobile use was suddenly replaced by a Socialist-Green government that promised to reduce automobile use. ...

"Delanoë had served in the city council and city senate of Paris since 1976 and he was president of the Socialist group in the city council from 1993 to 2001. Delanoë focused his mayoral campaign on the pollution caused by increasing automobile use in the city, promising to 'fight, with all the means at my disposal, against the harmful, ever-increasing and unacceptable hegemony of the automobile'. In his inaugural address, Delanoë quoted the composer Erik Satie, who (Delanoë said) summed up the opinion of many Parisians when he said, 'L'air de Paris est si mauvais que je le fais toujours bouillir avant de respirer' – 'the air of Paris is so bad that I always boil it before breathing'. Then he stated his two major initiatives to improve transit: reserved bus corridors on major streets, to speed up bus service, and a new tramway around the periphery of Paris.

"During its first year, his government also developed a plan for sustainable development of Paris, saying that 'limitation of the many nuisances associated with automobile traffic are at the heart of' the plan [which called for] among other things:

- a new division of public space, more favourable to bus, pedestrians, bicyclist, and roller skaters.
- better public transit service.
- parking policies that reduce automobile use, by favouring residential parking over commuter parking.
- a complete set of bicycle routes through the city.
- 'quartiers verts' (green neighbourhoods) in the centre of Paris, with one-way streets that would make it impossible for through traffic to use local streets.

"The two initial projects that came out of this plan had some success. A new tramway line was created, and 15 kilometres of car-free bus-bike-taxi lanes were built. {Continued in #165}

Ref: Preservation Institute, 2007

www.preservenet.com/freeways/FreewaysPompidou.html

And Also ...

"A crowd assembled near the escalators [at Melbourne's Southern Cross Station] and burst into four-part harmony. The song was a range of whinges, from 'why isn't myki working yet?' to 'why do I have to smell people's armpits in summertime?' ... The 'flashmob' choir was conducted by suburban guerrilla choirmaster Stephen Taberner."

Ref: Heckler, The Age, 4/7/10

From Freeway to Farm (Part 2)

“Because the project is temporary, [Project Director Chris] Burley said they are not planning to rip up the existing asphalt, which would cost thousands of dollars. Rather, the farmers will plant up to 150 fruit trees in pots that can be moved to other gardens or planted in back yards. Burley also said that in honour of the old Highway 101, they will be planting 101 beneficial plants among the fruit trees to help with pest control. ‘A lot of our energy is being spent in creating things that can travel off-site’, said Burley. ‘This is more like a springboard for urban agriculture all over the city’.

“Burley and other organizers hope to use the temporary farm as an educational resource and are developing a curriculum for schools that are interested in working at the facility. Currently, they are planning to collaborate with John Muir



A Truck Delivers Organic Soil

Photo: Hayes Valley Farm

“Elementary, the French-American School, and the Hayes Valley Neighbourhoods Parks Group. Addressing concerns about growing food on the site of a former freeway, the group has lab tested 64 soil points from the site and found that all parts except for one came back with less than the EPA’s standard for lead in soil. The HVF also notes on its FAQs page that using organic soils up to two feet thick generally makes food grown there safe for consumption. Nonetheless, the group will measure lead in the roots and leaves of the food they harvest before it can be eaten. Though Burley said they were rushing to get plants in the soil and trees in pots while still in the rainy season, the lot will be sustained with water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which donated a line for the plot to set up a drip irrigation system. While no estimate was available for how much food the facility would yield, Burley said their first priority was demonstrating the prospects for urban farming. ‘Our main yield is education’, he said. ‘We’re trying to teach folks about growing their own food on balconies, back yards, open-air parking lots and pavement backyards’.”

Ref: Mathew Roth, SF Street Blogs, 8/2/10

Business Transport Decisions (Part 2)

“The social impacts of your organisation’s transportation practices and its economic effect is not always evident. WorkHealth, the Victorian government’s initiative to improve the health of the Victorian community, reports a direct link between workplace productivity and employee health. Encouraging active forms of commuting to work such as walking, running and cycling can therefore directly improve employee health, thereby yielding business productivity benefits. Regular physical exercise can increase health significantly by reducing the risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, stress, anxiety and depression. Time savings gained from reducing business travel can improve productivity in the workplace (i.e. less time in airport lounges, more in the workplace) and also give staff more time with their loved ones. As a general rule, the ability to commute easily to work and a reduction in business travel can increase staff retention rates.

“Similarly, your organisation’s transport requirements have a direct environmental impact in terms of both greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollutants. Burning fuel in vehicles directly contributes to climate change

through the creation of greenhouse gas emissions. Australia’s transport spewed out nearly 80 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂-e) in 2007. That’s enough to fill 80 million houses – or every house in Australia 9.5 times. Local air pollution from motor vehicles is a significant health issue in Australia. It has been estimated that air pollution causes more deaths annually via respiratory problems than road accidents. From an air quality perspective, road traffic is particularly significant since it emits large quantities of harmful chemicals close to populated areas. An overall reduction in the number of vehicles and improving the efficiency of the vehicles on the road will therefore contribute to a reduction in air pollution and associated health issues. ...

“Any single thing that you do to improve your organisation’s approach to sustainable transport is a step in the right direction. In fact, it may be more appropriate for your organisation to start with individual and smaller actions initially, and work towards an integrated approach over time as you gain confidence and experience.” {Cont. in #165}

Ref: Your Sustainable Transport Guide, 22/3/10

http://www.greenfleet.com.au/library/scripts/objectifyMedia.aspx?file=pdf/9/56.pdf&siteID=1&str_title=Sustainable%20Transport%20Guide.pdf

Malvern Tram Depot Centenary

"Yarra Trams Chief Executive Officer Michel Masson said: 'A century ago on 30 May 1910, there was great excitement at the opening of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust depot. ... [Today] with more than 250 Yarra Trams employees and 83 trams operating on five routes, Malvern Depot [in Melbourne] is the largest of our eight tram depots', he said. The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust was a significant contributor to the history of Melbourne's electric tramway system. By 1920, this municipal tramway grew to almost 100 trams and 56 kilometres of tracks which extended to St Kilda, Caulfield, Glen Huntly, Hawthorn, Kew, Camberwell and Mont Albert. ... Malvern Depot has retained the original P&MTT building which is an imposing example of Edwardian industrial architecture. The National Trust has listed Malvern Tram Depot as a place of cultural heritage significance that is 'important at the national level as a large, intact, operating electric tramway depot recalling the formative years of electric tramway undertakings in the country'."

Ref: Yarra Trams Media Release. 30/5/10

"The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust Act 1907 established the P&MTT as the organisation charged with building electric tramways in the municipalities of Prahran and Malvern. Its charter was to provide better

transport for the area and assist in its development. Previous attempts by the railways to introduce a steam bus service had failed due to reliability and road conditions. The founding chairman, Alex Cameron became known as the 'father of Melbourne's electric trams'. On 20 October 1909 track construction began on the High Street line from Charles Street, Prahran to Tooronga Road, Malvern. A branch from this line went south along Glenferrie Road to Wattletree Road, where it turned east to terminate at Burke Road. The site for the depot was chosen in Coldblo Road where it remains to this day. ... By 1920 the P&MTT operation had been amalgamated into the rest of the Melbourne cable and electric tram system under the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board."

Ref: Yarra Trams Fact Sheet: History, 30/5/10



P&MTT 84 served Melbourne from Malvern Depot for 14 years before being transferred to Bendigo, where it ran in public transport service for a further 41 years.

Ref: Bendigo Tramways Fact Sheet

Free Buses on Sundays in Bendigo

"People travelling on the Bendigo Transit network will now get free bus travel on Sundays. The car-less Sunday promotion aims to get more people travelling into Bendigo city centre on the recently improved bus network and less people in cars. Since April 2008, 692 services have been added to the network, increasing patronage by 20%. The free travel is an incentive to help in monitoring how the services are operating and how they might be improved." Ref: Vic DoT Website, July 2010

And Also ... Indian Pyramids

"The power of the ancient Egyptian pyramids will be harnessed by Indian police in an attempt to cut road accidents in the country. Traffic officers in Nagpur, west of Mumbai, have agreed to allow small pyramids to be placed at 10 accident-prone sites in the city to see if their claimed positive energy can reduce crashes."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 14/7/10

China Rail

"China already boasts the world's fastest train: the

Maglev that bullets from Shanghai's Pudong airport to the city centre - covering 30 kilometres in just eight minutes at a top speed of 430km/h. Within a decade, it's hoped that this will be more or less the norm. ...

Traditionally, the Chinese are

sticklers for punctuality; this is reflected in its rail service. Not one of my trains was late during my month-long, 6000-kilometre-plus adventure. [My trip around China was] a fascinating insight into a country that's destined to stamp its mark on the 21st century."

Ref: Steve McKenna, The Age, 15/7/10

And Also ...

"I always love the revenue raising claims, mostly made by people who've been caught speeding and just can't accept that they might possibly be guilty of poor driving. My favourite is when people complain that the speed camera is at the bottom of a hill, as if it's acceptable or understandable that people will lose control of their car or concentration while driving downhill."

Ref: 'Beriberi', Brisbane Times, 16/7/10