

More on Urban Sprawl

"Already one of the world's largest cities by geographic footprint - stretching 100 kilometres from east to west - Victoria's Parliament today voted in favour of expanding Melbourne by another 43,600 hectares. ... The expansion is the biggest change to the size of Melbourne in almost a decade and will destroy thousands of hectares of Melbourne's green-wedge land - once dubbed the city's 'lungs' - as well as fertile food-growing areas to Melbourne's east. Today's vote was opposed by the Greens but supported by the Liberal-Nationals coalition."



Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 29/7/10

"Thank God our public transport system is so good. Otherwise it wouldn't be able to cope..."

"When most cities in the world are moving to medium density and locking the boundaries of the city to ensure that everyone can be serviced by transport / schools and hospitals. The Vic govt moves ahead to make the city bigger and even more spread out. This would be great if the govt will invest in infrastructure in these areas but they haven't even updated the metro train lines in 50 years. I cannot believe the short-sightedness of this plan."

'Do you support the move to expand Melbourne's city boundaries?'

Yes:	25%
No:	75%
Votes:	8,263

Ref: Age Poll 29/7/10

"It already takes me an hour to get from home to the city on the Princess Freeway Car Park; it cannot cope with more cars. I moved here from Sydney to get away from that bull. Why can't Melbourne look at the mess Sydney has made of it and try something more progressive?"

"Excellent decision, now the Great Australian Dream of owning a house with five bathrooms and a yard big enough to raise a horse stays alive - and all within a comfortable afternoon's drive of the city you nominally live 'in' ..."

"It is simple to see where the slums of the future will be. Just how idyllic will these suburbs out past Craigieburn be when it costs \$500 to fill the car with petrol?"

"London - one of the world biggest cities maintains its green wedges (commons) and has done over many centuries. They recognise that the green wedges are part of the soul and life of a city."

"A community that destroys its best food producing assets has rocks in its collective head."

"All the theory of creating sustainable cities and looking for a long term solution to housing affordability that I studied at university are completely in contrast to this decision."

"If you title searched any of these areas you will see where the major developers' land ends and regular Joe's land starts - right on the boundary."

"We need an independent urban planning authority with sufficient teeth to stand up against our ineffective parliamentary representatives."

Ref: Comments, The Age, 29/7/10

Public Transport in Victoria

Last week I attended a public transport forum in Melbourne. The first speaker was Brian Tee, Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Public Transport, who seemed genuinely keen to make things better (albeit apparently overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem and underwhelmed by the allocated resources, compounded of course by a policy of encouraging urban sprawl). Graham Currie spoke on the need for a Metro system as an answer to coping with Melbourne's growth. Paul Mees argued for reform of the public transport administration and that money spent on a Metro could be better distributed across the system. My view is that both are important and we shouldn't be arguing about one or the other given that we have plenty of resources even if this means diverting money from building freeways, supporting car races, and other wasteful programs. There was however consensus that we are paying too much (by comparison) for some of our new rail projects, ie, they are not being efficiently managed.

My question, given that in Europe and the US they are rediscovering their waterways for the movement of both passengers and freight, and that our two biggest cities spread right around the Bay, was: Why do we continue to ignore the use of waterborne transit on Port Phillip Bay? Graham's first response was that "ferries are expensive". Compared to what? A road intersection? Next came: "but where would they go?" This was a strange response from one of our leading transport planners, particularly given that many of our railway lines and Smart Bus routes terminate near the coast!

Stephen Ingrouille, 9/8/10

Park Avenue, New York

"As its name might imply, Park Avenue used to be a real park. In the late '20's, early '30's it became all cars, all the time. This happened throughout New York City. Whereas before, our streets were really like the living rooms of New York. Where people interacted and kids played and people walked. In the '30's and '40's, virtually all major streets in New York were widened, so that the sidewalks that used to be 20, 25 feet wide, become 15 and 10 feet wide. And what's interesting is that there were a lot of very heated battles about the future of New York City streets in the earlier part of the 20th century. Where you had residents up in arms about the fact that their stoops were being sheered off to make room for more cars or that entire facades of buildings on 5th Avenue had to be built back. This was a wrong turn that New York made. It didn't have to be this way. We didn't have to turn over all of our public space to the motor vehicle. You would be very hard pressed to find an accredited urban planner or architect who believes that we should continue this pattern of auto-centred development in our cities. Virtually everyone now understands that we need to turn it back the other way.

"Right now in New York is a very exciting time because we have an administration at the Department of Transportation and a permissive mayor who's really allowing the DOT to reclaim some key parts of the city. And what's happening in Times Square, what's happening with the Bike Network being expanded. What's happening with more block parties and street closures giving people a taste of what their lives could be like every day of the year if our streets were simply designed in a portion for the majority. The big question is, will this continue? Will we see this continued reclamation of New York City's streets? I think that the cat's out of the bag. I don't think we're going to go back to the days when it was all car, all the time. The only question in my mind is, how quickly this is going to happen and if the streets are going to be reclaimed soon enough to really stem a lot of the environmental problems that we're seeing and also to be enough of an inspiration for the world.

"Peace Meal improvements here and there will not a revolution make. We need to transform New York. If New York can do it, the world is watching. I think right now, what we're seeing around the world is really the consequences of New York taking that wrong turn. A lot people don't know that Robert Moses worked all over the world. His highway and automobile-centric urban planning was replicated in Sao Paulo

where he worked very directly. But really throughout the world, where everyone thought the future of cities was all about the car. So now we have a real opportunity and I think responsibility to the rest of the world because of the wrong turn that we helped everyone else make. And show that vibrant, business-friendly, happy urban life is really about streets that are inviting to people on foot and on bike and that give all residents a decent transit alternative.

"That's something I think we need to do better as a movement, is understanding that a lot of people in New York do rely on their cars because the bus sucks in their neighbourhood. They live a half hour bus ride from the subway and so we need to bring good quality transit service to all corners of the city. But what's been proposed to date is certainly not radical. We're talking about giving the majority people on foot and on transit a little more room to breathe. I'm confident that Times Square and some of these other public plazas and biking experiments are going to show the way for a more thorough reclamation of the streets of New York."

Ref: Paul Steely White, Street Films, 25/2/10
www.streetfilms.org/fixing-the-great-mistake-autocentric-development/

Swanston Street, Melbourne

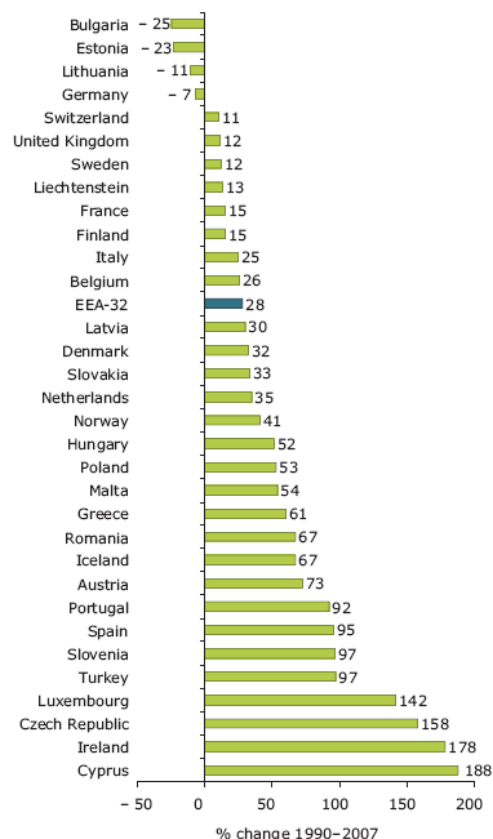


Swanston Street, Grassed for a Weekend C2003

Photo: Wendy Morris,
(Looking south, taken from the Town Hall portico)

Growth in European Emissions

“Transport sector greenhouse gas emissions increased by 28% over the period 1990–2007. This compares with a reduction of 5 % in emissions across all sectors and a reduction of 11 % from the non-transport sectors. The increase has occurred even though fleets have improved their energy efficiency and therefore reflects increases in transport volumes. Preliminary numbers for 2008, where the financial crisis starts to have an impact show an overall decline in emissions of around 2% compared to 2007. The majority of EEA [European Environment Agency] member countries (except for Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania and Germany) show an increase in transport emissions between 1990 and 2007 principally due to increased transport movements. Most countries continue to increase their emissions between 2006 and 2007 illustrating the continued difficulties in reducing transport emissions in the EEA countries. Only very few countries (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal) show a decrease of emissions from 2006 to 2007.” **Ref: Towards a Resource-Efficient Transport System. EEA, 2010**



Note: Excluding international aviation and maritime transport (according to Kyoto).

Source: European Topic Centre for Air and Climate Change, 2009.

Cyclists vs Lorries in the UK

“London Mayor and Transport for London (TfL) have unveiled three important new measures to tackle collisions between cyclists and lorries on London’s roads. The first Trixi (cycle safety) mirror to be trialled in a UK city has been installed on a traffic signal at a junction in Tooting, London. Trixi mirrors provides drivers of large vehicles better visibility of cyclists at junctions and 39 of them will be installed at traffic signals on London’s roads for a six-month trial period. The mirrors aim to reduce the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured in collisions with lorries. In all, 37 of them will be installed on the Barclays Cycle Superhighways pilot routes, with 31 in place before the scheme launches on July 19, 2010.

“The trial coincides with a thought-provoking new TfL poster campaign that illustrates the potentially deadly situation cyclists put themselves in if they ride up the left-hand side of lorries at junctions. It carries the stark warning that undertaking at junctions can be fatal.

“A Memorandum of Understanding has also been signed that commits the Mayor, TfL, and the FTA to working together to improve cycle safety in



London. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: ‘Safety is the top priority of the cycle revolution that we’re bringing to London. That is why we are taking direct action to do everything we can to give cyclists and HGV drivers the tools and information they need to navigate our roads, and each other, safely. The Trixi mirrors will improve the

visibility of cyclists and our poster campaign will increase their awareness of the danger of being on the inside of heavy vehicles at junctions’, Johnson added. ‘But I am especially pleased that the HGV industry has responded and is ready to act on this issue.’” **Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 12/7/10**

Comparing CBD Parking Spaces

CBD parking spaces in 1996 per 1000 CBD jobs:

Wellington	1050	Portland	400
Christchurch	940	Melbourne	340
Phoenix	910	Brisbane	320
Denver	730	Sydney	220
Detroit	710	Copenhagen	220
Auckland	650	Zürich	140
Perth	630	London	120
Los Angeles	520	New York	60

Ref: Kerry Wood, Trans-Action #94, 25/5/10

Streetcars and Baseball (Part 1)

“Streetcars had obvious and unique links with baseball. In the late 19th century, public transit via streetcars regularly intersected with baseball, with mutual benefits. Unlike many other [sponsoring] enterprises, streetcars served a practical purpose for baseball – delivering large numbers of people to the games easily, quickly, and cheaply. Collaboration between baseball and streetcars therefore was consequential for both. Streetcars grew in quality and scope during a time when baseball was steadily evolving. The origins of the streetcar in the United States can be traced to 1827, when a horse-drawn carriage that could carry a dozen passengers was introduced in New York City. ...

“By 1890, approximately 200 electric streetcar systems were operating in the United States. The growth continued at a dramatic pace – according to an article published in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine in 1898, ‘A decade has worked wonders in the evolution of the electric railway, as in many other modern things....It has grown from an experiment to a universal institution’.

“Nationwide, streetcars were found to be dependable, operating in almost any weather condition; were easy to keep clean; and were relatively inexpensive to construct. In addition, the average streetcar fare of five cents was affordable for many. The vehicles significantly trimmed the travel time from one point to another. A person could travel the distance of a half hour’s walk in 10 minutes via streetcar. The electric streetcar, or trolley, had other major advantages. Steam locomotives could be louder, grimmer, more cumbersome, and less comfortable than streetcars, which therefore were considered better suited for urban settings. Streetcars also offered accessibility to areas that were often beyond the immediate reach of railroads. This accessibility led more people to start riding streetcars during the 1890s to work, school, worship, and other vital activities.

“Looking to expand this patronage, streetcar companies sought other compelling destinations to encourage ridership and to maximize profits. The companies needed to keep the operating and administrative costs down without increasing fares. To continue extending the transit lines, streetcar executives needed the largest possible

customer base to justify new investments in infrastructure and electricity. Streetcar companies therefore increasingly promoted the recreational opportunities along their routes, especially during evenings, weekends, and holidays, when traditional ridership was low. Summer was seen as a lucrative time for travel to recreational pursuits, and some streetcar lines ran only in the summer months to accommodate the extra traffic. People were encouraged to use streetcars, which normally operated with their sides open at that time of year, to enjoy leisure activities near and far – for example, sightseeing tours in the country, shopping sprees in the city, picnics, day-trips to the seashore, and attendance at concerts and theatre matinees.



The speed, capacity, and low price of streetcar transportation intersected with the public attraction of baseball games in a way that provided mutual benefits.

“As part of this outreach, streetcar companies devised other incentives to lure riders onto trolleys. Some companies set up recreation areas at the end of streetcar lines. The areas became known as ‘trolley parks’ and typically included such diversions as roller coasters, carousels, and other amusement attractions. In May 1896, the Street Railway Journal reported that at least 100 companies had opened their own trolley parks in the previous 10 years). By

establishing the parks and facilitating access to other entertainment venues, streetcar executives did much to make the thirst for recreation an integral feature of the trolley experience. ‘The American people – or at least a very large part of the American people – [have] become a pleasure-loving folk’, proclaimed Harper’s New Monthly Magazine. ‘Is there a more festive-looking vehicle than the open electric car, with its happy-faced occupants?’ Baseball became an important way of filling streetcars with ‘happy-faced occupants’. The comparatively young sport had mushroomed in popularity, and streetcar companies grasped that providing access to the games could enhance their own business. One streetcar executive commented that it was important ‘to keep in with the baseball people’.” {Continued in #168}

Ref: Robert Cullen, TR News, Jan/Feb 2010

<http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/trnews/trnews266tra/nsitbaseball.pdf>

And Also ... Hot Dog

*“A dog trapped in a car on a hot day in eastern Pennsylvania honked the horn until he was rescued, a veterinarian says.” **The Age, 14/7/10***

Sustainable Travel Towns (Part 2)

“At the start of the Sustainable Travel Towns program, Darlington and Worcester had populations of roughly 100,000 people, while Peterborough [had] an urban population of about 137,000. Peterborough and, to a lesser extent, Worcester, saw some population growth during the course of the program. ...

“The baseline household survey carried out in the three towns in 2004 included in-depth attitudinal research with over 400 interviewees in each town. These surveys suggested that the great majority of respondents (between 80% and 94%) considered recent traffic growth to be a problem. The proportions finding the consequences of car traffic ‘no longer bearable’, or ‘not so bearable’, were 51% in Darlington; 42% in Worcester; and 30% in Peterborough. In all three towns, a majority of respondents favoured making sustainable transport modes a priority in transport policy (between 85% and 94%), with greatest support for development of public transport services (judged to be effective by between 76% and 91%); and developing bicycle routes (judged to be effective by between 73% and 85%).

“The strategies adopted in the towns were, in many respects, quite similar:

- *development of a strong brand identity;*
- *large-scale personal travel planning;*
- *travel awareness campaigns;*
- *cycling and walking promotion;*
- *public transport information and marketing;*
- *school travel planning;*
- *workplace travel planning. ...*

“The challenge for any town setting out to promote walking and cycling is to increase the level of active travel, whilst also securing ongoing reductions in road casualties. In the three towns, there were some notable successes in reducing absolute numbers of casualties, as in Worcester where substantial increases in walking were accompanied by reductions in all pedestrian casualties, including fatal and serious injuries; in Darlington, where a huge increase in cycling took place alongside a reduction in fatal and serious cycling injuries; and in Peterborough, where there was a reduction in overall cycle casualties that was not dissimilar to the national reduction, despite the town’s growth in cycling in some areas. From such results, it is clear that increases in active modes need not inevitably be accompanied by increases in casualties. Moreover, in all three towns, the risk per kilometre walked or cycled reduced, in some cases very substantially. ...

“All three towns achieved increases in active travel, which are likely to have resulted in benefits to health. Between 2004 and 2008, the proportion of respondents to the household travel survey who did not walk or cycle (i.e. reported that they ‘almost never’ walked or cycled) fell by 11% (or 2%-points, from 23.4% to 20.9% of people, looking at the weighted data). The proportion that reported that they walked or cycled ‘almost daily’ increased by 6% (or 3%-points, from 46.6% to 49.4% of people)

“While it was difficult to quantify the extent to which the Smarter Choice Programs had improved quality of life, there were a number of instances where officers in the towns suggested that there were likely to have been improvements. These included: making it easier to access a range of destinations; reducing disturbance caused by traffic; minimising the impact of travel on the natural environment, heritage and landscape; improving the experience of end-to-end journeys (with data suggesting increased satisfaction with public transport in two out of the three towns); reducing amenity problems caused by parking overspill around employers; improving work-life balance; and increasing social capital by encouraging community engagement. Quantitative and qualitative surveys in all the towns repeatedly demonstrated high satisfaction levels with the interventions: for example, customer satisfaction surveys in Worcester found that 70% of residents receiving personal travel planning information had found it ‘helpful and useful’; and brand awareness surveys in Peterborough found individual information materials and services were rated as ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’ by between 54% and 96% of respondents. ...

“We conclude that the Sustainable Travel Towns program was successful in reducing travel by car, and increasing the use of other modes, and that the program offered very high value for money. The trends in the towns were different from those in other medium-sized urban areas, with respect to car, bus, walking and cycling trips per person and also with respect to changes in traffic. ... We judge that the experience in the three Sustainable Travel Towns (and elsewhere) is now sufficient to justify widespread development and delivery of town-based Smarter Choice Programs. There would also be great merit in piloting of new initiatives, to apply the principles of travel behaviour change to medium and long-distance journeys and to travel in rural areas, and to focus more intensively on travel for work.” Ref: Effects of Smarter Choice Programs in the Sustainable Travel Towns (Summary Report). UK DoT, February 2010 www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/smarterchoiceprogrammes/pdf/summaryreport.pdf

Noise from Transport (Part 3)

“Australia’s vehicle noise limits permit double the noise allowed by international standards and need to be upgraded, according to a report issued by the National Road Transport Commission today [2001]. The report compares Australia’s vehicle noise regulations with those in Europe, the USA and Japan, and presents a wide range of strategies and initiatives to address engine and engine brake noise.

... Vehicle noise, and especially loud engine brake and motorcycle noise, is consistently rated as a major community concern. It can have a major impact on sleep, lifestyle, property values and driver fatigue and stress. Studies have shown that nearly 40% of Australia’s population is exposed to undesirable traffic noise and a further 10% to excessive traffic noise.”

Ref: National Transport Commission, 15/5/01
www.ntc.gov.au/newsdetail.aspx?newsid=25

“Although a zero value on the decibel scale represents the weakest sound audible to humans and sound intensity increases in correspondence with numeric values, the relationship among the values on the decibel scale is not linear but algorithmic. Therefore, the simple assumption that a sound with a 50 dB level is twice as intense as a sound with a 25 dB level would be incorrect. Rather each three decibel increments in the scale indicates an approximately 50% change in sound pressure (or noise) levels. Thus, a 3 dB increase means sound levels have increased by about 50%. If a car that emits a noise level of 77 decibels (a very noisy car) is modified to produce a noise of 80 decibels, that would indicate that its noise levels would be 50% higher than previously. So, while 77 to 80 dB may not seem like a big change, it would be half as much again increase in audible sound.” **Ref: A Quieter Road, 2010** See links:
<http://beaconsfieldparade.weebly.com/noise-info.html>

“All of the European Union countries have adopted the United Nations ECE Regulation 51 [which] sets a maximum noise level for light vehicles of 74 dB(A) (decibels) measured by a drive-by test (New Zealand is 81 dB(A), although even that is not enforced as there is no equipment to do it properly). ... It appears however that in practical terms very little modification of motor vehicles is undertaken or tolerated in European countries. This may well be due to the fact that having prescribed testing methods for new and in-service motor vehicles there is no scope for modification to increase the noise of the motor vehicle.”

Ref: Noise Off Charitable Trust
<http://www.noiseoff.co.nz/intnl/index.htm>

More on Flying Cars

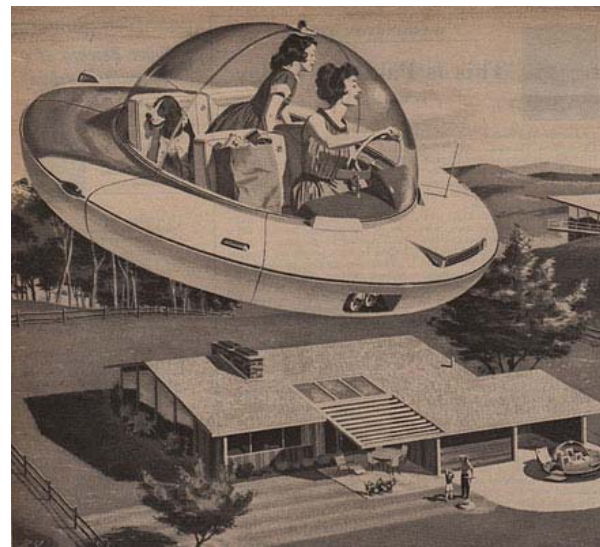


“Moon colonies, personal robots, death rays, four hour working weeks – science has failed to deliver a whole lot of awesomeness. That said, the greatest let-down has got to be flying cars. Where the hell are they? Why are we still using roads like suckers? The idea of a flying car goes all the way back to 1905 and a short story titled Sultana’s Dream by an Indian feminist writer (fact). By the 1950s the flying car had become a symbol of the ‘Glorious Future’ that awaited us and science fiction magazines were all ‘Yeah, yeah, it’s totally coming. Just give it a couple of decades’. It’s now 2010. Does your car fly? Maybe General Motors and the other automobile giants wouldn’t be in such craptastic financial straits if they had invested in stuff people wanted (flying cars) instead of boring family sedans.”

Ref: Mikolai Napieralski, The Vine, 29/1/10

“Can they develop flying cars that are carbon-friendly? Also, can you imagine every time you want to go to the shops, having to contact air traffic control for permission to take off?”

Ref: ‘Sandidee’, The Vine, 29/1/10



> Note the paper shopping bag in the picture!