

Victorian Budget

"This Budget starts to reverse years of neglect of infrastructure by fixing the basics, especially in transport. The Coalition will provide \$100 million extra for basic rail maintenance and invest heavily in infrastructure and service expansions, such as \$484 million over five years for new public transport and rail freight infrastructure and operational improvements. The 2011-12 Budget includes \$222 million for seven new trains – the first of 40 for Melbourne commuters – and planning for new railway stations at Southland and Grovedale."

Ref: Treasurer, Media Release, 3/5/11

"The Victorian Coalition Government's 2011-12 Victorian Budget builds the foundation for the future expansion and improvement of Victoria's public transport network by funding the planning of five major rail extensions and the establishment of the Public Transport Development Authority (PTDA) [which] would adopt a back-to-basics approach, including better maintenance, improved reliability and detailed planning for network expansion. 'The Authority will be a single public transport authority to administer our trains, trams and buses, replacing the current confusing structure of multiple agencies and authorities', [Transport Minister Terry] Mulder said. 'The first job of the Authority will be to audit all Victorian public transport assets and report publicly on the value and condition of those assets and the cost of renewing them and bringing them up to 21st century standards. The Authority will also play a key role in overseeing planning for new rail lines to Avalon and Melbourne airports and Doncaster.'" Mr Mulder said the Budget delivered on commitments made by the Coalition Government, including:

- \$10 million over four years to establish the Victorian Public Transport Development Authority;
- \$6.5 million over two years for the Doncaster rail link planning study;
- \$2 million over two years for a feasibility study into a rail line to Rowville;
- \$6.5 million for a two-year feasibility study into a Melbourne Airport Rail Link;
- \$3 million to start planning a direct rail link to Avalon Airport;
- \$2 million to investigate reviving rail connections between Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo;
- \$4 million over four years for an inter-capital high-speed rail planning unit within the PTDA;
- \$1.2 million over four years for the Taxi Services Commission."

Ref: Transport Minister, Media Release, 3/5/11

"The Victorian Coalition Government is delivering on its commitment to deliver more train services to Wendouree Station and improve access to rail services for people in Ballarat. ... 'This will mean a total of 141 services will stop at Wendouree each week, a significant increase from the current 73 services', Mr Mulder said. ... 'Bus connections will also be improved to help people access the station in the morning and ... at night'."

Ref: Transport Minister, Media Release, 3/5/11

"The Victorian Coalition Government is delivering on its commitment to return passenger rail services to the north-central Victorian town of Talbot. ... 'It is important that we improve access to public transport for all Victorians, including those living in smaller rural towns' [Mr Mulder said]. The service will begin in 2013, connecting with Maryborough line trains once Talbot Station has been re-opened."

Ref: Transport Minister, Media Release, 3/5/11

"The Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF) has welcomed the first Baillieu budget as a positive start on delivering the government's public transport promises. MTF Chair, Cr Jackie Fristacky is pleased to see the Regional Rail Link maintained and funding studies for rail lines to Doncaster, Rowville and the airports. Cr Fristacky also welcomed the commitment to a Public Transport Development Authority and Metropolitan Planning Strategy to better guide Melbourne's growth. 'There is a real opportunity for transport, the missing link of Melbourne 2030, to be better embedded in planning,' she said. 'There is a lot to be pleased about in this budget – new trains, new stations, station upgrades and grade separations. 'But buses and bicycles seem to have been overlooked. ... 'With such a clear community mandate for better public transport, it is also concerning to see so many 'shovel-ready' road projects in the budget, while public transport projects – rail to Doncaster, Rowville and the airports – are only in the planning stage."

Ref: MTF, Media Release, 3/5/11



Budget Discussion ...
"Micro-minimalist format 3111³ Randolph to conserve energy under the new government's policy of reduced resource consumption"

Road vs Rail Funding

“Road building has received four times more federal, state and local government funding over the past decade than new rail projects. ... [A] report, by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), says Victoria's investment in rail and light rail – measured as a percentage of the state's economic output – has been among the lowest in the country. Of all the states, only Tasmania spent less – largely due to it having no commuter rail system. Using figures from the federal Department of Infrastructure and Transport, the Tax Office and the Bureau of Statistics, the ACF found that Australia's public transport sector is a poor cousin to roads when it comes to funding. Since 2000, local, state and federal governments in Australia have spent 4.3 times more on the construction of public roads and bridges than on public railway construction, the report says.

“The study includes data showing each state's 10-year average for spending on roads, versus its spending on other transport, as a percentage of gross state product. In Victoria over the past decade, as patronage on public transport has boomed – in part because of a spike in oil prices in 2006 – money continued to be pumped into roads, the report finds. ‘Notorious for poor spending on public transport, Victoria has spent just 0.11% of gross state product on railways, harbours and bridges in the last decade. Nearly three times as much has gone on road construction in the same period’, it says.

“The NRMA warned last month that only the strong Australian dollar was protecting motorists from the price of petrol at the bowser rising to \$2 a litre. A surge in commuters leaving their car at home because of rising petrol prices and catching the train or tram would further stress Melbourne's overburdened rail and tram systems. The ACF's Monica Richter said governments across Australia continued to prefer road building and to ‘reward’ car drivers. ‘We need governments to tip the scales’, she said. ‘Two-thirds of the transport budget should be spent on public and active transport and one-third should be spent on roads’. Using figures from the federal Transport Department on road construction and comparing them to data from the Bureau of Statistics, the group found that \$11.3 billion was spent nationally on road construction in 2008-09. This contrasted with \$3.3 billion spent in 2008-09 on rail construction nationally.”

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 27/4/11

Which should receive more government funding - road building or new rail projects?

Road: 6%
New Rail: 94%
Votes: 2208
Ref: Age Poll 27/4/11

“One of the key reasons I voted Liberal at the last election was their views on improving public transport. If the Libs continue the Bracks/Brumby non-funding of public transport they will be out on their collective ear at the next election. Deliver on public transport or get out.”

“How curious it is that when asked in polls, people consistently say that we should spend more money on rail and public transport than roads; yet politicians never seem to listen and act on this.”

“We get to vote basically between two very similar main-stream political parties, with very similar agendas.

Roads assume plentiful petrol, but with peak oil, vehicle use must wind down. Rail must be our future, with transport hubs to finish the distribution for goods and services.”

“Build more roads and you get more car parks and obesity, pollution and oil consumption. Invest in active and public transport and you bring health, access, mobility and liveability. It's not that hard – unless you favour the roads lobby above the people.”

“And there's more: an extra 100,000 cars will be added to the road network this year. Do the math over several years and you have a problem that will clearly rival LA's spaghetti gridlock.”

Ref: Readers' Comments, The Age, 27/4/11

See the ACF Report at:

www.acfonline.org.au/articles/news.asp?news_id=3372

Transit Pass Using Pre-Tax Dollars



See: www.rtd-flexpass.com Photo: Andrew Dye

*“I recently returned from some time in the States, where a couple of things caught my eye in Denver. The poster [above] was in many of the (free) buses that run up and down the central 16th Street Mall in the CBD, and describes a program we'd do well to imitate here.” **Andrew Dye, 9/5/11***

Bhutan Urban Transport System

“Thimphu, the capital and largest city of Bhutan, and Phuntsholing, the second largest city, are rapidly growing and modernizing with increased rural migration to urban centres. With higher population and rising incomes of Bhutanese, more motorists are on the road, and the cities are becoming strained by inadequate commuter transport infrastructure. In response, the Kingdom of Bhutan’s Ministry of Information and Communications is undertaking a feasibility study for introducing an eco-friendly Urban Transport System in the country under the Joint Support Program of the United Nations Development Programme and the Danish International Development Agency. The study will explore all eco-friendly urban transport options such as LPG/CNG, battery operated buses, electric trolley buses and also the existing diesel bus operation.”

Ref: Tender Document, 28/2/11

Train now Stopping at Stawell

“A passenger train has stopped at the Stawell train station in western Victoria for the first time in more than a decade. Stawell residents gathered at the station, to welcome the train to town. In the 90s passenger rail services were withdrawn from the Wimmera and replaced with buses. In a deal negotiated with the former Labor government, The Overland, the train service through from Adelaide to Melbourne, will stop at Dimboola, Nhill, Horsham, Ararat and now, the new addition, Stawell. The State Government will pay \$2.65 million to secure 60 seats for Victorian travellers on The Overland train. It’s a deal the Stawell locals welcome. Northern Grampians Shire councillor Kevin Erwin says for years The Overland train had thundered through town without stopping. He says today is different. ‘It’s taken a lot of lobbying. In my terms as mayor I had many meetings with the Department of Transport to make this happen. ‘It’s a really good and significant day’.”

Ref: Laura Poole, ABC News, 12/4/11

And Also ...

“Developer of highway software systems, Buchanan Computing, has announced that it is launching the latest version of its SignPlot signage design software [which] can now spell-check traffic signs in order to avoid the surprisingly common error of signs being erected with embarrassing mistakes. ... In the event of a spelling or capitalisation problem, the ‘Hintman’ feature appears, rolls his eyes and suggests possible replacement words.”

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 7/3/11

National Freight Strategy

“Developed by Infrastructure Australia and the National Transport Commission, this document outlines a blueprint for a truly national, integrated and multimodal system capable of moving goods around our vast continent quickly, reliably and efficiently. For too long there’s been a lack of planning consistency across jurisdictions with transport modes too often pitted against one another for a share of finite infrastructure dollars. Historically, this inconsistency and conflict has been to the detriment of rail. The National Freight Strategy will help put an end to both. ... From the Government’s perspective, we want a long term strategy which greatly increases the amount of freight being transported on the back of trains or in the hull of ships.” **Ref: Anthony Albanese, Track & Signal Magazine, Autumn 2011** See: http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/publications/file/NLFS_220211.pdf

More on Rail vs Road Investment

The article, Rail vs Road Investment (in #195), was based on information received from the Minister’s office, and as far as I can work out (because it’s rarely clear) the amounts \$27.7 billion (roads) and \$1.2 billion (rail freight) mentioned are for completed projects over the past 12 months. There was no mention of any completed public transport projects in metro areas (even after 3.5 years in office). If this is not correct, please let me know. It would be really useful to have spending identified (in an easily decipherable manner) between roads, rail freight, public transport, active transport, airports, maritime, etc. Funding for road/rail separation should be a separate category (although I would argue that its benefit favours road users). The other issue is how much is actually spent on project delivery and how much is frittered away, for example, on consultancies that duplicate information.

As we are talking about taxpayer’s money, this is a matter of public interest, and I think the community should know how public money is being spent on transport infrastructure. Certainly roads are an important component of infrastructure spending, as is rail freight, but we can also argue that public and active transport should be a significant part of the Federal spending mix. It has been the custom at the Federal level in Australia – alone amongst the OECD economies – to not fund public transport, so any change in that direction is welcome. To document the progress to more enlightened outcomes, we need to have transparent and easily comparable information made available.

Stephen Ingrouille, 12/4/11

Bus Rapid Transit (Part 2)

“The Metrobus system in Mexico City is an interesting example of a BRT system in one of the busiest cities in the world. The metropolitan area population is 23 million. Mexico City has different modes of public transport such as: metro, LRT, trolleybuses, BRT, midi-buses and taxis. The different modes of transport do not compete, instead complement each other. The Metrobus system (two lines) carries 420,000 passengers daily and its total fleet is integrated by 200 articulated and 12 bi-articulated buses.

“Mexico City Government has implemented two BRT lines in two years, and its plan is to have constructed 220 kilometres in the next 4 years. It is important to highlight that the BRT infrastructure cost per kilometre is one tenth of the metro infrastructure cost, and in the same way the BRT implementation time frame is a fraction of metros’. In all these public private partnership projects the stakeholders have strived to improve the public transportation service performance: travel time savings, reliability, safety and security, gas emissions reduction and capacity at an affordable price.

“BRT Implementation Guidelines defined BRT as: ‘A flexible, high performance rapid transit mode that combines a variety of physical, operating and system elements into a permanently integrated system with a quality image and unique identity’. In order to improve sustainable and affordable mobility in urban areas, France launched in 2005 its own concept ‘Buses with a high level of service’ (BHLS), taking into account the - Bus Rapid Transit concept developed in the

USA. Throughout Europe, similar strategies can be observed, such as the ‘trunk network’ in Stockholm (Sweden), and the ‘Quality Bus Corridor’ in England and Ireland.

“Nantes Métropole is a conurbation located in the west of France, with nearly 600,000 inhabitants. Three tramway lines have been re-introduced since the 80’s. The line 4, so called BusWay, is the fourth line in dedicated lane which entered into service on 6th November 2006; this 7 km long line has 15 stations. It connects the ring road to the centre of Nantes in less than 20 minutes, with a frequency of 4 minutes at peak times. This line 4 is a bus system which took the elements that made the tramway a success (dedicated lane, well designed and equipped stations, priority at intersections, high frequency and extended hours) and applied them to.



Transmilenio BRT, Bogota, Colombia
Photo: Volvo Bus Corporation



Metrobus, Mexico City Photo: D Peña



BusWay. Nantes, France Photo: D Peña

“The operator Semitan and the urban authority Nantes Métropole are the main stakeholders. The project costs considered €50M for infrastructure (7 km that includes studies / design, running ways, park and ride / stations, road works joined to the project, system and operating tools). Rolling stock: €9.2M for the 20 specific Natural Gas articulated buses. Hence the cost average per km reaches at €8M /km, that is around 3 times less than for a tramway project.

“This concept is a road-based public transport that applies to all conurbations regardless of size, developed to promote bus projects with efficient, primary structuring routes that play a decisive role in future transport networks.”

Ref: Domingo Peña, 18/2/10

Traffic in Melbourne's Inner East

"As well as providing an alternative to the car, improved public transport also can serve to reduce congestion on the Eastern Freeway and city arterials without the necessity of building expensive road infrastructure. To do so, the public transport alternative needs to be frequent, reliable and operate on priority road space. Accordingly permanent dedicated SmartBus lanes on Victoria Parade and Hoddle Street are sought. Kerbside activity and land use needs to be protected to facilitate the development of Hoddle Street as a commercial boulevard and for Victoria Parade to continue to develop as such. The Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF) submits that kerbside parking in Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade is essential to support these adjacent land uses. Kerbside parking is of 1 or 2 hours duration, indicating a need for short term use for local activities. By contrast, the all day car parking on the median in Victoria Parade is for commuter parking – it is suggested that this lane could be returned to traffic use. With such competing demands for road space, this traffic lane is too valuable to be used for commuter parking.

"To function well for users of public transport, SmartBus stops need to be attractive to be used by those who live or work near these stops. Users must be able to wait, cross the road and not feel threatened by volumes of traffic passing. Thus well designed, user friendly stops integrated with adjacent land use are essential. The MTF considers that a traffic lane should be dedicated to the bus lane. ... If the bus lane is shared with the parking lane ... this will create extra road space for cars as there will be no buses in the four traffic lanes. Induced / suppressed traffic [road diet] is a well-established phenomenon. Additional road space will attract additional traffic, compounding the problem with congestion.

"The proposal to remove high occupancy lanes reflects that their operation has not been maintained by vigorous promotion and enforcement. Their removal due to lack of policing underscores the need for dedicated permanent bus lanes which are enforced. The MTF is disappointed at the proposal to abandon the T2 lane due to misuse. Without promotion or policing, there has been no chance to assess how effective this technique could be to manage congestion. Car occupancy provides a very real and relatively inexpensive opportunity to reduce congestion while maintaining access, and car pooling is ideally suited for the commuter trip to workplaces. The MTF strongly encourages the

State Government to develop this initiative, and reminds the Government that \$5 million was allocated in the last budget to this task.

"The MTF also notes that there is only a cursory attempt to recognise cycling in this proposal. Albert Street is an alternative to Victoria Parade, but there is no north-south alternative presented for Hoddle Street. Integrated planning requires that all modes are catered for in some respect, even if it is by an alternative route, and would like to see more attention paid to this issue. With increasing journeys by bicycle in the inner city at over 12% of journeys to work in the morning peak, this mode needs to be catered for in the planning in and around Hoddle Street."

Ref: Jackie Fristacky, MTF, 11/4/11

Walking at Work

"Why should workplaces care about getting employees active? It is estimated that:

- Return on investment for workplace wellness programs could be as much as 3 to 1;
- Workplace physical activity can reduce sick leave by up to 32% and increase productivity by up to 52%³;
- Poor employee health and absenteeism is costing Australian business \$7 billion annually.

"Various international studies show that employers who actively encourage physical activity experience the following:

- Improved productivity;
- Fewer insurance and worker compensation claims;
- Reduced absenteeism;
- Decreased accidents;
- Reduced staff turnover;
- Lower-cost related to retirement, training and orientation;
- Higher staff morale;
- Improved ability to cope with workplace changes."

Ref: **Walk the Block**

brochure, Victoria Walks, April 2011 See: www.victoriawalks.org.au/walktheblock

"The direct and indirect costs of obesity and obesity related illnesses to the Australian economy in 2008/09 were estimated to be \$37.7 billion."
Ref: Obesity in Australia, Medibank, March 2010

And Also ...

"A new airline providing dedicated travel for cats and dogs is being launched in the United States. Unlike conventional airlines, Pet Airways will not consign its four-legged flyers to the cargo hold. Instead, the animals will ride in the main cabins of specially converted planes. They will have pre-flight walks, frequent checks by flight attendants and stopovers. In an advertisement ... the pets are called 'pawssengers'." Ref: ABC News, 15/7/09

On the Melbourne Airport Rail (Part 2)

"Tenth, a train would have no impact on the price of airport parking, which is one of the key gripes of those who support the rail line. High prices are the result of monopoly pricing and would best be addressed in other ways.

"Eleventh, there are other transport projects with a higher economic and social warrant for the expenditure of scarce government funds than an airport rail link. Indeed, there are projects in other portfolios, like health and education, that would have a much higher return.

"Twelfth, an airport rail line would be the wrong project. With airport use projected to grow strongly, the key ground transport challenge is to move Melburnians from dispersed home and work locations to the airport and back again. That can't possibly all be done by car due to congestion, but neither can it be done by rail from the CBD.

So, there are many reasons to be sceptical about the need for an airport rail line at this time. If the RACV wants to strengthen its public transport credentials, there are plenty of other more deserving projects it should advocate ahead of this one. The Government has indicated that it is undertaking another feasibility study of a rail line to the airport. It would be best for the RACV to sit tight and wait to see what that brings. Even so, I'm impressed by the RACV's general sophistication. The 'A' in RACV seems to be changing from 'Auto' to something more general like 'Accessibility'."

Ref: Alan Davies, Melbourne Urbanist. 19/4/11
<http://melbourneurbanist.wordpress.com/2011/04/19/is-the-proposed-airport-train-off-the-rails/>

I can think of another reason. Unless the connection from the railway station to the airport is convenient, it



can be a deterrent. Sydney (domestic) airport has several changes of level, long corridors, awkward barriers, and a rather lacklustre station and trains. Brisbane has an uninspiring climb to the station then a boringly long trip on the suburban rail. Portland, Oregon, by comparison is brilliant. You walk from the luggage carousels straight onto the platform [pictured above] where one or two Light Rail (MAX) vehicles are waiting to take you into the city.

Stephen Ingrouille. 20/4/11

Problems with Biodiesel

"The only service station in Sydney that offered greenhouse-friendly biodiesel has stopped selling it after the fuel failed government air quality tests. The B100 fuel can power an unmodified diesel engine and reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by more than 80% as well as reducing engine wear, but federal Environment Department tests show it was releasing unacceptable levels of sulphur. The results mean hundreds of people driving biofuel vehicles, including some Marrickville Council trucks, now have nowhere to fill up if they want to keep running on B100. ... Biodiesel can be made from several organic products, including soybeans, tallow and used cooking oils, and some trucking companies and private vehicle owners prefer it because it can reduce the vehicle's carbon dioxide emissions by 89.5%, according to CSIRO tests. ... Other biofuels sold by the garage, B5 and B20, which contain smaller portions of organic waste mixed with fossil fuel diesel, passed air quality tests. ... The source of the B100 fuel that failed the tests remains unclear. ... Two industry sources said the fuel might have been from an imported batch."

Ref: Ben Cubby, SMH, 20/4/11

And Also ...

"Rises in fuel prices have led to an increase in the number of used fryer grease rustlers roaming restaurant alleys in the United States. Grease thefts have spiked whenever fuel prices climbed during the last four years and this spring is no different, according to Tom Cook, president of the National Renderers Association. ... Recyclers typically contract with restaurants to pick up the waste product. The grease is cleaned and sold for use as biofuel, livestock feed and other products.

"An Omaha recycler has filed theft reports with police in Omaha and Lincoln in Nebraska, and Sioux City, Iowa. Thieves recently stole about 4,200 pounds (1,909 kgs) of used grease from six Lincoln fast-food restaurants. Processed fryer oil is not trash. It is called yellow grease and is traded. Its value is driven by higher prices of gas and ethanol. Recyclers and collectors pay restaurants about 18 cents a pound for grease. After further processing, it can be sold for 42 to 45 cents a pound, said Cook."

Ref: Reuters, SBS World News, 28/4/11

A Fuel Price like Alice

"The Alice Springs Town Council is calling for fuel prices to be made equal across the country. The desert town is feeling the pinch of soaring fuel prices across Australia."

Ref: ABC News, 20/4/11