

Sustainable Cities

"Transport is often the most obvious of a city's shortcomings. From Beijing to Tehran to São Paulo, streets are choked with traffic and pedestrians are choking with fumes. The solution to this is clear: good public transport ... Rail transport generally does better [than buses]. A folly can be seen in those Chinese cities that are responding to clogged roads by building carriageways one above the other. Such places would do better to emulate Seoul, whose last mayor tore down an elevated freeway in the middle of the city and thus restored to view a long-buried river seen by the locals as a source of spiritual health. This, and his improvements to public transport systems, have done wonders for his popularity." **Ref: The Economist 5/5/07**

On Roads vs Public Transport

"'Good public policy and plain common sense demonstrates that investment in public transport and traffic management solutions is more effective and more economically sound than investing in new roads,' (said shadow finance minister and federal member for Melbourne, Lindsay Tanner, and)... former state transport parliamentary secretary and Brunswick MLA Carlo Carli said ... 'I support sustainable transport ... And that really means using existing infrastructure and more investment in public transport'." **Ref: Royce Miller, The Age 1/5/07**

Meanwhile in Sydney ...

"... toll roads in Sydney are booming, with figures showing road operators are collecting millions of dollars a month as private road patronage soars despite rising tolls. In the first three months of the year, the city's publicly listed toll roads all reported higher traffic volumes, and some - such as the Westlink M7, M2 and M5 - revealed huge increases in toll revenue. Drivers on the M5 paid \$414,958 a day - 16.2 per cent more than in the previous quarter. On the M7, motorists spent \$424,340 a day - up more than 26 per cent on the previous period. The extra revenue generated by the M2 and M5 was partly due to toll increases. In the 2007-08 financial year, the Eastern Distributor, M4 and M5 expect to collect \$335 million from drivers."

Ref: Jordon Baker, SMH 26/4/07

When I was in Sydney at the end of April the popular debate was whether or not road tolls should be cashless (on the E-Tag model) rather than being tolled at all (ref EastLink in Victoria). The real problem of course is that if you build these roads they will get used with or without tolls – at least while we have cheap oil.

Housing Obesity

The Victorian Planning Minister, Justin Madden recently "flagged a competition to design smaller, more energy efficient new housing" which led to *Herald-Sun* front page headlines: 'Your Homes Are Too Big' and 'Madden Swipe Sparks Outrage'. "Melbourne's household growth – and by that I mean dwellings – is twice the population growth," Mr Madden said. 'Our increasing affluence has led to bigger houses, and I'm sure you're familiar with the description McMansions, and one of my favourites, housing obesity.'" **[ref Mary Bolling, urban affairs reporter Herald-Sun 17/5/07].**

Of course the Minister is right, particularly in the more affluent suburbs where typically houses are getting bigger – something to do with taxation? – while family sizes are shrinking. In some of the fringe suburbs, where the McMansions must be expensive to heat and cool, some families can't afford to fully furniture the houses – except of course for the essential (and energy hungry) plasma TV. Apparently, with the Federal Government Baby Bonus there was a sharp rise in the sale of plasma TVs – just what's needed when we are trying to reduce greenhouse gases.

There is another side to housing obesity and that is garage obesity. Should we be planning for 3, 4, 5 + garages? Surely land has more value than for parking cars? Let alone the extra pressure such cars add to our roads.

The *Herald-Sun* editorial on the same day [17/5]: "...there are people who live in some very big houses who take exception to the term obesity. They argue that in a free market, if they have the money they are entitled to build them as big as they like." Perhaps this highlights market failure, where some live beyond their means and we fail to account for greenhouse gases and pollution.

Andrew's Comment



"Got a McGasguzzler to go in my McGarage."

Peak Oil

No shortage of oil? Where there's smoke...

Firstly there was the SBS documentary *Crude Impact*, then the ABC documentary *Crude*, and now we have the movie: *OilCrash*, described as a 'Crude Awakening - a 90 minute documentary on the planet's dwindling oil resources'.¹

"A single barrel contains the equivalent energy of twelve men working for a whole year: We owe our wealth to the abundant supply of cheap energy. Ten calories are needed for every calorie produced on a US farm: We literally eat oil." Ref *OilCrash* www.oilcrashmovie.com

"If you're not worried about Peak Oil, you will be after watching *OilCrash*."

Marrit Ingman, The Austin Chronicle



Depleted Azeri Oilfield

Picture Ref *OilCrash* www.oilcrashmovie.com

The Post Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook: recipes for changing times by Albert Bates (Director of the Global Village Institute for Appropriate Technology in Tennessee) provides useful, practical advice for family and community to make the transition beyond the era of abundant and cheap 'sweet' oil (the importance of the food-energy relationship is highlighted). And so as not to appear another 'doom and gloom' text, it's interspersed with enticing recipes to draw in a wider audience!

(Thanks to Mike O'Connell in NZ for this item).

¹ In Melbourne at Cinema Nova, from June 7
➤ Panel Discussion on June 5 at 7pm with Kenneth Davidson (The Age), Elliot Fishman and Phil Hart (ASPO).
Bookings: www.cinemanova.com.au

Transport Visioning Process

There is no single technology or mode that will bring our transport system up to a reasonable standard. The solution will be through the implementation of a range of strategies. Some good things are starting to happen but the visioning process can help identify and encourage new ideas. Examples include:

- ◆ Planning our new suburbs around village nodes and hubs linked by sustainable transport corridors.
- ◆ Encouraging walking and cycling strategies and healthier communities.
- ◆ Increasing car pooling and car sharing.
- ◆ Linking our existing suburbs with better transport systems.
- ◆ Planning how we can reshape our middle and outer suburbs over the next twenty years.
- ◆ Expanding and complementing our existing transport network to cope with the anticipated demand for public transport. For Melbourne:
 - Commuter ferries?
 - Semi-express trams?
 - New tram routes in the CBD:
 - Russell Street link?
 - Victoria Street link?
- ◆ New transit corridors:
 - Werribee South to Watergardens?
 - South Yarra to Brunswick?
 - CBD to Clifton Hill via Brunswick?
- ◆ New transit technologies:
 - Light Trams; Guided Buses; Metro?
- ◆ Sustainable buildings and infrastructure.

Light Tram (Ultra-Light Rail)

The year-long trial, each Sunday, of a Light Tram (PPM 50) on a branch line in the UK came to an end on December 17, 2006. The operation achieved 99% for punctuality and reliability but also provided an 80% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to the heavy rail Monday-Saturday service. The vehicle can carry around 50 commuters although larger version with a carrying capacity of 170 is available.

More Information: www.parrypeoplemovers.com

"The Parry People Mover is the technical breakthrough that we have been waiting for. It offers Community Railways the chance to dramatically reduce both their train and infrastructure costs on the most lightly used lines. We ignore this opportunity at our peril."

Chris Green

Chairman, Railway Forum, April 2006

Online: www.goingsolar.com.au/transport
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