

Tax Incentives for PT Use

The peak transport industry group TTF Australia (Tourism and Transport Forum) has called on both major parties to provide tax incentives for public transport use. TTF Managing Director Christopher Brown said greater use of public transport was fundamental to improving the livability of Australian cities and to reducing greenhouse gas emissions: *"Both major parties have embraced the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and tackle climate change. Encouraging people to leave their cars at home is one way in which we can address transport-related greenhouse gas emissions but through our Fringe Benefits Tax regime, the current Federal taxation system actually provides an incentive for people to drive more by salary packaging their cars. When you consider the greenhouse impact of private vehicles compared to public transport, this arrangement does not make sense. The time has come for both parties to stand up and be counted on this issue, and to reverse the tax incentives that encourage car use over public transport. The transport industry wants to see a greater level of engagement in urban public transport from both sides of politics. Providing tax incentives for public transport would be an excellent way to start."*

Ref: TTF Media Release 16/10/07

{TTF Australia is the peak national industry group representing tourism, transport and infrastructure. It's comprised of the chief executives of the 200 most prestigious investors, operators, regulators and developers across Australia.}

The Cost of a Car

"According to RACV it costs thousands of dollars a year to own a car. They've calculated that it costs over \$600.00 per month to run even the smallest of cars, that's a massive \$8137.48 per year!"



Ref: Flexicar email 16/10/07

{Flexicar provides car hire by the hour see www.flexicar.com.au for more information}

Traffic Congestion

"Congestion is an unavoidable aspect of most urban cities, but there is a level at which it starts to detract from liveability, increases transport costs and affects the reliability of travel for public transport and freight. There is no single, simple solution to managing congestion. Urban transport planning has traditionally been dominated by road expansion needs."

Ref: Promo for VicRoads Seminar 11/10/07

Federal Funding of PT

"In a historic step, the mayors of seven city councils will today sign a joint letter demanding federal funding for public transport. The seven mayors from the Eastern Transport Coalition represent Greater Dandenong, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges city councils. The council leaders represent more than one million residents. Eastern Transport Coalition chairman Mick Van De Vreede said the letter would be sent to Prime Minister John Howard and Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd. "Members of both parties have already indicated that they agree with the need, primarily for environmental reasons, to fund urban public transport," he said. "Now we want their leaders to agree as well. The current blinkered policy makes no sense, why pour billions of dollars into urban road capacity projects without considering other transport options? Options such as public transport also deal with congestion, help families and the environment."

Cr Van De Vreede said in the past two months, the Federal Government and the Opposition had agreed to fund sectors that were not traditionally their responsibility. It was now time both committed to funding for public transport, he said."

Ref: Geraldine Mitchell Herald Sun 15/10/07

People would prefer the Federal Government spend the budget surplus on public transport than tax cuts. That's the message from nearly 70 per cent of the people surveyed by the Australian Research Group for a poll released by ACF. Charles Berger, ACF's Strategies Director, said: *"the overwhelming public support for ambitious federal investment in urban public transport should be a wake-up call to all parties. If the parties are serious about protecting the environment and buffering families living in the city fringes from rising petrol costs, they will ensure that public transport is readily available and accessible. Families in suburbs and growth areas are already vulnerable to fluctuating fuel prices. A federal government that neglects to invest in public transport would be making things worse for these families, as well as failing to address climate change....The federal government has invested around \$60 billion dollars in roads over three decades, and much of this for urban roads, so they're already involved in urban transport policy."*

In 2005 the Sustainable Cities report of the bipartisan House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage recommended the Federal Government significantly boost its funding commitment for public transport, particularly light and heavy rail.

Ref: ACF Media Release 18/10/07

Car Pooling

In Transport Newsletter #29, Darren McClelland noted that local governments have some reservations about taking on a role to promote car pooling to residents and businesses in their municipality through an on-line, car pool database of choice. One of the perceived barriers is the fear of travelling with strangers. Security, safety and privacy can all be resolved by recommending some best practice steps for car poolers to take to reassure themselves. For example, passengers could seek character references, take their partners to meet the driver at their home, meet at a common public place as an alternative to home addresses, advise friends and family of their driver's details and so on. Some initial nervousness about sharing with strangers should be reconciled with other aspects of public life that readily accept engagement with the unknown.

Another concern is that car pooling is not feasible given that many people work irregular hours. However, if every single car commuter agreed to try car pooling only one day a week and commit to it, this would potentially result in a 20% reduction in traffic. It has been identified that a like commitment by Canada's driving commuters would meet the Canadian Government's Kyoto Protocol commitment. Also, car pooling databases can be tailored to meet special needs such as dropping off children at schools.

Some councils are also concerned about their public liability for any mishaps that might occur in a car pooling scheme that they promote. However appropriate precautions, such as effective disclaimers, may alleviate these concerns.

Thanks to Darren McClelland for this item.



A Vanpool vehicle in Seattle in the US where there are already over 700 Vanpool groups

Oil and War

"The Federal Government's apparent admission that securing oil supplies is a key factor in Australia's military involvement in the Iraq war is drawing political fire. Prime Minister John Howard today denied he had admitted that oil was behind his decision to keep Australian troops in Iraq... 'I haven't said in my speech that the reason we went to Iraq is oil or the reason we're staying there is oil. We are not there because of oil and we didn't go there because of oil. We don't remain there because of oil. Oil is not the reason'. In his policy speech, Mr Howard admitted the need to secure oil supplies and to help protect US interests in the Middle East were major factors in Australia's continuing military presence in Iraq.... Treasurer Peter Costello also denied that Australia's commitment to Iraq was about cheaper petrol prices." **Ref: Herald Sun 5/7/07**

"Many first-time voters want politicians to use their taxes to tackle global concerns, rather than currying favour by pouring dollars back into their hip pockets.... The Herald Sun spoke to 20 first-time voters.... All younger voters prioritised climate change.... All thought the Iraq war an important issue. Most were appalled by the death toll. Says Shane Littlejohn, of Mirboo North: 'I hope they're there to make it a better place, to fight terrorism, not just for oil'." **Ref: Herald Sun 15/10/07**

Oil Dependence

"And let me nail that easy but mindless catch-cry 'No blood for oil', as though we could somehow wish away the strategic, the utterly vital nature of oil to our daily life, to the prosperity of the nation and the economic health of the world..."

(Then PM) Bob Hawke 21/1/91

Ref: The Australian 6/7/07

"Many commentators predict that world oil prices will rise sharply as the supply of cheap readily-available oil becomes more limited. Over the last 20 years, Australia's three biggest cities have developed substantial tollway networks with a strong reliance on private sector investment. Many of these facilities have concessions lasting 40 years from now – well into the timeframe of peak oil. Will private car travel become an unaffordable luxury? How will toll road ownership be affected? Is there a future for toll roads after peak oil?"

Ref: Victorian Transport Branch of Engineers Australia' brochure promoting their 2007 Transport debate. Oct 07

Online: www.goingsolar.com.au/transport

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