

New Weekend Tickets for Melbourne

The Victorian Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky, has announced a new 5xWeekend Daily Metcard to be introduced in April 2008. The new Weekend Daily is an extension of the popular Sunday Saver and will allow people to purchase five days of Saturday and Sunday travel on the one Metcard at cost of just \$2.90 per day on Saturday or Sunday anywhere on the metropolitan network (trams, trains and Met buses). By way of comparison, a DayTripper in Sydney costs \$16.00¹ (bus, ferry and train but excludes the monorail and the light rail.)

The Victorian announcement is part of a range of good initiatives – reducing outer suburban fares by up to 50% and regional rail fares by around 20% - designed to attract increased patronage to the public transit system. Fare increases due on January 1, 2008 are being kept in line with CPI.

Ref: Government Media Release 28/11/07

Transport Breakfast

400 people attended a breakfast at Docklands on November 29 for a briefing on Victorian transport initiatives. The ministers and the departments should be congratulated for making themselves and their staff available. These events also assist in enhancing communication within the industry. However, there was a rather strange video – reminiscent of something in a museum – on what is wrong with Melbourne's rail network.

Meantime, the Roads Minister, Tim Pallas, could hardly contain himself while announcing all the new road projects and the prospect of getting his hands on the honey pot following the Federal election, yet strangely failed to mention climate change until challenged by a question. (Part of his answer referred to the solar sound barrier [see # 24] on the Tulla-Calder Interchange.) It's a pity that there was not more time for questions like: "Where in the world has building more freeways solved congestion?"² or "If we can find technicians to install new traffic lights why can't we find them to give priority to trams?"

Yes, the Roads Minister keeps saying that public transport should get priority on the roads, but it's just not happening fast enough.

¹ On a recent trip to Sydney I found that I could not make good use of my Sydney DayTripper due to non-existent or a 45 minute wait for bus services on a Friday afternoon. Twice I had to phone people to pick me up by car adding to the already congested roads.

² Gordon Price can answer: virtually nowhere!

Ghost Trains

"Train drivers and regular commuters call them 'ghost trains' — and, unlike the paranormal, there's a rationale behind them. Every week, Connex [in Melbourne] schedules 44 'non-passenger services'. The ghost trains don't appear in the timetable because they don't technically exist. This means Connex cannot be fined if the train is late or cancelled and the rail operator receives no payment to operate them....Every day, empty trains are shunted across the network. Some to stabling yards to rest between the morning and evening peaks, while other carriages are rushed out to replace defective trains. But the 44 are available for passenger use. Most operate outbound from the city during the morning peak, to position trains in the outer suburbs to deal with the early morning rush....One Connex driver said the ghost trains were popular with savvy commuters and rail enthusiasts. 'Regular passengers can work out how often and when they run. There's some bloody good express services which can get you from the city to the suburbs in half the time,' he said. 'I guess the only spooky thing is that these trains actually run on time'."

Ref:

Stephen

Moynihah *The Age* 14/11/07



Picture: The Age

Ghost Planes

"British Airways has been flying airliners from Britain to North America this month without a single passenger aboard because of a cabin crew shortage, the airline said on Wednesday. One environmental group sharply criticised the 'phantom' BA flights, saying they indicate once again how indifferent the aviation sector can be to the world's battle against global warming.... Earlier this year, British Mediterranean Airways, or BMed, a struggling carrier then operated as a BA franchise, was accused of using 'ghost' flights between Heathrow and Cardiff in order to retain its slots at the London airport."

Ref: AP, *The Age* 15/11/07



CNG Plan for Tasmania

"There's a plan to roll out Compressed Natural Gas refuelling infrastructure throughout Tasmania. International company, CompAir, outlined its proposal in a submission to a parliamentary committee looking into alternative vehicle fuels for the state. The plan proposes an initial refuelling station in Hobart, working towards a corridor of stations linking major cities along the existing natural gas pipeline. Gary Woodhead from CompAir says CNG is an environmentally friendly and cheaper fuel alternative for short distance fleet vehicles. 'It's certainly far more environmentally friendly than fossil fuels and commercially it can be quite cheaper. I mean our early modelling is suggesting that if you're paying diesel at \$1.40 you potentially could see a CNG price at equivalent rates of about 98 cents'."

Ref: ABC News 11/10/07

Parking Problems in Hobart

"In Tasmania, the Hobart City Council has been criticised for allowing more multi-storey car parking in the Central Business District (CBD). The Lord Mayor Rob Valentine says projects in the planning phase include car parks, office space, retail stores and supermarkets. He says an extra 1,200 parking spaces will be built over the next two years as part of a revitalisation of the CBD. The Tasmanian Conservation Trust's Christian Bell says the council's got it wrong. 'On a sustainability agenda, I really can't see how encouraging the building of more car parks in the city is basically a useful exercise,' he said. 'I mean we should really be doing things that actually make the city more user friendly to other modes of transport than it presently is'."

Ref: ABC News 9/11/07

Problems with Roads

"[We need] abandonment of freeway widening and construction as it encourages individual car and truck use. Given that transport produces 25% of greenhouse gases ... and that oil is a scarce and rapidly depleting source, it is irresponsible to encourage increased use of oil-based individual transport. The creation of a transport department where public transport and VicRoads are equal partners, rather than VicRoads effectively being a law unto itself, always having another freeway on the drawing board for when the current project is finished."

Ref: JennyMN The Age Blogs 24/10/06

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Peak Oil

"The German-based Energy Watch Group will release its study in London today saying that global oil production peaked in 2006 - much earlier than most experts had expected. The report's author, Joerg Schindler, said its most alarming finding was the steep decline in oil production after its peak... The results are in contrast to projections from the International Energy Agency, which says there is little reason to worry about oil supplies at the moment. However, the EWG study relies more on actual oil production data which, it says, are more reliable than estimates of reserves still in the ground. The group says official industry estimates put global reserves at about 1.255 gigabarrels - equivalent to 42 years' supply at current consumption rates. But it thinks the figure is only about two thirds of that"

Ref: Ashley Seager The Guardian 22/10/07

More information:

- ♦ http://globalpublicmedia.com/chris_skrebowski_on_alarming_new_peak_oil_report
- ♦ <http://www.energywatchgroup.org/Erdoel-Report.32+M5d637b1e38d.0.html>

"The world's proved reserves have been have been falsely puffed up by the inclusion of 300 billion barrels of speculative resources, according to the former head of exploration and production at Saudi Aramco, and this explains the industry's inability to raise output despite soaring prices.... Mr al-Huseini began by noting the obvious inconvenient truth of the oil market of recent years: that production has barely increased despite a soaring crude price and massive investment by the industry."

Ref: David Strahan, Energy Bulletin 30/10/07

<http://www.energybulletin.net/36458.html>

"Leading figures from the Middle East oil industry added their voices on Tuesday to those warning that the world is struggling to sustain rising oil production. 'There is a real problem - that supply may not be possible to increase beyond a certain level, say around 100 million barrels,' Libya's National Oil Corporation chairman Shokri Ghanem said at an industry conference. 'The reason is, in some countries production is going down and we are not discovering any more of those huge oil wells that we used to discover in the Sixties or the Fifties'."

Ref: Alex Lawler/Peg Ryan, Reuters 30/10/07

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL3080747520071030>

They have things called transition communities here in the UK where people get together to try and prepare for Global Warming and Peak Oil.

From our European Correspondent 24/10/07