

The Channel-Tunnel Connection

"The State Government has conceded its \$1 billion bay channel deepening project will result in increased traffic on the roads — bolstering the case for an east-west tunnel to complete Melbourne's freeway network. A spokesman for Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas yesterday agreed that by expanding the capacity for container traffic into the Port of Melbourne, channel deepening would add to pressure on the road network. And the spokesman, Matt Nurse, cited the controversial proposal for a new east-west road link as one of a number of projects that could help the city cope with the expected increase in container truck traffic. The comments came after trucking magnate Lindsay Fox blasted the Port Phillip dredging plan as a short-term fix that would add traffic to an already overcrowded road network. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd also entered the debate over urban traffic congestion yesterday, declaring that gridlock in major cities such as Melbourne was imposing excessive costs on the national economy."

Ref: Josh Gordon, The Age 22/1/08

The Rail Connection

"The Prime Minister rightly pointed to the negative impact of traffic congestion on the economy. Gridlock costs time and efficiency. There were failures in planning, leadership and co-ordination....The figures for rail patronage clearly show that given a service — reliable, comfortable and inexpensive — people will use it. Two other factors have a strong bearing on public transport: the rising cost of petrol and emissions from vehicles. Cars and trucks not only choke the roads, they choke the atmosphere." **Ref: The Age 23/1/08**

Smart Travel Cards

"...when it comes to transport smartcards Hong Kong is unrivalled. There are at least 14 million in circulation (double the city's population of 7 million). The smartcard's operators, Octopus Cards Limited, say they are used by 95 per cent of people aged 16 to 65 in more than 10 million transactions a day worth about \$HK29 billion (\$4.2 billion) a year....Though initially used on the mass transport railway, Hong Kong's underground rail system, its use has widened to the point that in some ways it operates as a second currency. It is now used for most public transport in Hong Kong - trains, buses, minibuses and ferries ... Many people link it to their credit cards so that the stored value is automatically topped up when it approaches zero." **Ref: Margaret Harris, SMH 24/11/07**

Not So-Smart Travel Cards

"Sydney's long-suffering commuters will have to wait years, perhaps even a decade, for an integrated cashless ticketing system for buses, trains and ferries after the lemma Government finally terminated the contract for the failed Tcard project yesterday. In a bid to save face, the Transport Minister, John Watkins, immediately promised the Government would recoup the \$95 million NSW taxpayers have forked out on the delayed project, starting yesterday with the seizure of a \$10 million performance bond. ... 'Ongoing delays, failures and the company's appalling project management have left the Government no choice,' he said. ERG had warned the Government that if it was dumped, it could be 2017 before Sydney had an integrated ticketing system. ... The Opposition's transport spokeswoman, Gladys Berejiklian, said Mr Watkins had misled taxpayers regarding the state of the Tcard project. 'Despite John Watkins telling Parliament in December that he was aware of problems with the Tcard project in August and September, \$30 million worth of taxpayers' money went down the drain,' Ms Berejiklian said."

"The admission that the lemma Government has spent \$95 million on this failed project is \$30 million above the figure given late last year - where and when was this additional money spent?' Mr Watkins told a budget estimates hearing in October that the Government had spent \$65 million on the Tcard project, but yesterday he increased that figure to \$95 million. A spokesman for Mr Watkins said: 'The amount at 30 June 2007 was around \$65 million. This was confirmed by the Auditor-General in his report. As the Auditor-General noted, the cost of the School Tcard was on top of this amount: about \$15 million as at 30 June 2007. 'Since then, we have had a further six months of expenditure, including some significant invoices from RailCorp for the installation of equipment. RailCorp, as a party to the project, was acting as it should have under the contract'."

Ref: Alexandra Smith, SMH 24/1/08



Photo: Bob Pearce, SMH, 24/1/08

"Transport Minister John Watkins [said] he would now have to restart his search for a workable all-in-one cashless ticketing system for Sydney's ferries, buses and trains. ... The Tcard has been riddled with software faults, but it was not just ERG that was at fault. A key sticking point in the project is Sydney's train fare system. It has more than 120 fare products that have proved a nightmare to integrate."

Ref: Alexandra Smith, SMH 23/1/08

Meantime in Victoria and WA

"Transport Minister Lynne Kosky has admitted a new public transport smartcard may not be fully operational in Melbourne until early next year - almost two years after its original start date. Ms Kosky was today forced to defend a Government costing of the myki ticketing system, which it has been revealed did not take into account the cost of operating the system. Documents not included in Auditor-General Des Pearson's myki parliamentary report show the full cost to the Transport Ticketing Authority (TTA) of implementing and operating the new system to be about \$1 billion. The new figure reportedly includes capital costs of \$211 million, operating costs of \$454 million, risk allowances of \$140 million, TTA operating costs of \$139 million and a \$189 million contingency fund to account for cost blow outs. The Government has consistently maintained the implementation cost to be \$494 million. But Ms Kosky today denied the Government had tried to hide the true cost of running the project."

Ref: Jane Holroyd, The Age 4/2/07

"Perth was the first Australian city to have rolled out a smartcard system. It has been fully operational for a year and not only allows passengers to pay for their transport fares but also pay entry to station car parks."

Ref: Stephen Moynihan, The Age 1/2/07

Running on Empty

ABCTV recently repeated the 2007 *Difference of Opinion - Running on Empty* with John Carey, Paul Mees, Peter Newman and Alan Moran. If you missed it, visit:

http://www.abc.net.au/tv/differenceofopinion/content/archives/do_20070726.htm

for the video or transcript. Here's an extract:

"MORAN: ...the motorist is paying considerably more in taxes than it's getting back in roads as opposed to the public transport which...

NEWMAN: There's a \$20 billion deficit on that front.

MORAN: There's no deficit. There's \$16 billion against 10.

NEWMAN: If you include the health costs, the air

pollution, all those things.

MORAN: We could do that sitting in here.

NEWMAN: Why shouldn't a market pay for the cost that it imposes on society?"

Ref: ABC TV (as above) Cartoon: Warren Brown



Portarlinton Ferry

"Portarlinton residents are again fighting for a ferry service that would cut the trip to Melbourne to 45 minutes. Bellarine Ferry Group chairman Grant Hutchins said the State Government would need to help fund the commuter ferry through a fare subsidy before it became financially independent. 'In the past, it twice failed because the operators were entrepreneurs taking a punt on a good idea,' he said.

He said a ferry service was a public service that deserved government support in the same way that roads, trains, hospitals and schools were funded. He called for an investment of up to \$5 million. 'By connecting Portarlinton, via fast ferry, to Melbourne you effectively cut (a trip) in excess of 100km and one to two hours to 40kms and 45 minutes, and that would have an obvious massive beneficial multiplier impact ... You would be connecting 50,000 (Bellarine residents) to Melbourne in an environmentally friendly manner.' Mr Hutchins, the licensee of Portarlinton's Grand Hotel, said the ferry would increase property prices, boost business and swell the Bellarine's population. He said there were 5000 people on the Bellarine Peninsula who commuted to Melbourne through Geelong. Even if only 10 per cent used the ferry, it would make it worthwhile. Mr Hutchins predicted a ferry could do for Portarlinton what SeaChange and years of interest had done for Barwon Heads....

Geelong Chamber of Commerce executive director Lawrie Miller said the ferry, while a 'great idea,' was an unrealistic financial reality. 'I couldn't see it being viable,' he said. 'There wouldn't be enough traffic to warrant it.' Mr Miller said previous attempts at running a ferry had left the operators broke.

The State Government is working on a master plan for a safe harbour at Portarlinton, and the Bellarine Ferry Group's secretary, John Rae, said the harbour would need to provide a safe berth for the ferry to work. Mr Rae said the ferry, in off-peak hours, could travel a tourist route around the bay, stopping at coastal destinations, including Geelong."

Ref: Mex Cooper, Geelong Advertiser 21/1/08

And also ...

"Hop on a city circle tram in Melbourne and you may be one of the thousands of people tempted to drive down the Bellarine Peninsula for the Queenscliff Music Festival..."

Ref: Media Release, Minister for Tourism 28/8/06

It could have read: '... tempted to catch the public transport - high speed ferry - to the Bellarine Peninsula ...'