

Melbourne Transport

The Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC) has conducted a survey of public transport users across the eastern suburbs, asking views of current services, how they may be improved and about the free early bird train tickets. ETC Chairperson Cr Mick Van De Vreede said that commuters want more rail services, new lines and the free early bird train tickets extended to connecting buses and trams. "Representatives of the ETC spoke to 592 users at the Box Hill, Glen Waverly and Belgrave railway stations, Monash University and the Doncaster Park and Ride. The results show that only around 24 per cent of commuters believe that the current train or bus services meet their needs and that there is demand for new and increased services. It comes as no surprise that commuters waiting for a bus at Doncaster, which they can't be guaranteed of getting a seat on, want a train line instead. Users of the Belgrave station and Box Hill station want more services on the Belgrave/Lilydale line and students at Monash Uni just want better public transport services including a rail extension from Huntingdale and on to Rowville. This highlights the fact that we need a long term plan to improve public transport services in the east. The past year has seen public transport patronage significantly increase following the removal of zone 3 and massive hikes in the price of fuel. How will it cope if even more people decide to use it? "We also asked commuters if they think that the early bird free train tickets are a good idea – and they do think they are a good idea but want the tickets extended to buses and trams. Commuters know that there is no point to a free train ticket if you have to buy a ticket for the bus to get to the train!" Cr Mick Van De Vreede said.

- 71 per cent of commuters at the Doncaster Park and Ride want rail to Doncaster.
- 51 per cent of commuters at the Belgrave station want more services on Belgrave/Lilydale line.
- 50 per cent of commuters at the Box Hill station want more services on Belgrave/Lilydale line.
- 33 per cent of commuters at Monash Uni want rail to Rowville and 24 per cent want more services on the Dandenong line.
- 52 per cent of commuters at Glen Waverly want more services on that line.
- 79 per cent think the early bird train tickets are a good idea.
- 94 per cent want the free tickets extended to connecting trams and buses.

Ref: ETC Media Release 6/5/08

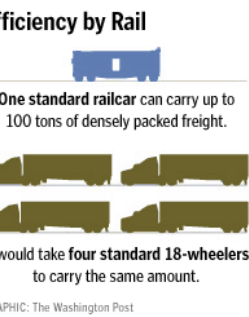
US Railroads Roar Ahead

"The freight railway industry [in the US] is enjoying its biggest building boom in nearly a century, a turnaround as abrupt as it is ambitious. It is largely fueled by growing global trade and rising fuel costs for 18-wheeler [trucks]. ... In the 1970s, tight federal regulation, cheap truck fuel and a wide-open interstate highway system conspired to cripple the railroad industry, driving many lines into bankruptcy. The nation's 300,000 miles of rails became a web of slow-moving, poorly maintained lines, so dilapidated in spots that tracks would give way under standing trains. ... But the changing global market has fueled prosperity - and the need to add track for the first time in 80 years. Soaring diesel prices and a driver shortage have pushed freight from 18-wheelers back onto the rails. ... A train can haul a ton of freight 423 miles on one [US] gallon (3.78 litres) of diesel fuel, about a 3-to-1 fuel efficiency advantage over 18-wheelers, and the railroad industry is increasingly touting itself as an eco-friendly alternative. Trucking firms also use the rail lines; UPS is the railroad industry's biggest customer. Rail traffic, revenue and profit began to soar in 2002-03 and seem largely immune to the economic downturn. Last Tuesday, for instance, CSX reported a record first-quarter profit. On Friday, the stock price of Western rail giant Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) hit an all-time high. At the industry's nadir in the 1970s, the

average annual rate of return on investment for a railroad company was 1.2 percent. By 2006, that number was 10.2 percent.

And even though the economic slump has reduced key traffic about 4 percent this year compared with last, it has not slowed the railroads' urgent track laying."

Graphic Ref: Washington Post



Ref: Frank Ahrens, Washington Post, 21/4/08

Sustainable Sydney

Comment: The Consulting firm SGS are to be congratulated for excellent work in preparing the Sustainable Sydney plan and for a superb presentation last week at the University of Melbourne. It sounds like the Sydney Lord Mayor and CEO are championing the project but the barrier will be the NSW State Government. My question related to parking and that oxymoron: a sustainable building with car parking. SGS had clearly thought through the issues and arrived at sensible solutions of minimising car parking and making the parking that is provided able to be easily converted into more appropriate uses in the future.

Federal Budget

“Transport Minister Anthony Albanese said \$51 million of spending would be brought forward to begin eight major Victorian road projects in 2008-09, instead of one year later. ... According to the Government’s own statistics, urban congestion will cost Melbourne \$6.1 billion by 2020 on current policies, behind Sydney’s \$7.8 billion, but double Brisbane’s costs and /or triple Perth’s. Mr Albanese said the Government would spend \$277 million on Victorian road construction and maintenance in 2008-09 and eliminate 55 black spots on the state’s roads at a cost of \$11.4 million.”

Ref: Darren Gray, The Age. 14/5/08

Comment: The goal is to sift through the budget media releases and make some sense of what is new, what has already been announced, what is being given priority, and what is being discreetly announced. The clear initial winner is road building which will encourage more traffic, more congestion, and the need to build more roads. That’s a strategy and a clear winner for the road building lobby. Roads get \$3.08 billion, Rail (read freight) gets \$972 million, the bureaucracy gets \$20 million for Infrastructure Australia, and the Building Australia Fund gets \$20 billion.

Feasibility (nothing-gets-built) Studies get \$75.5 million (of a total of \$132 million):
NSW - \$20m (of \$30m) to look into the Metro.
NSW - \$5m (of \$15m) to look into the M5.
Vic - \$12m (30m) to look into the Eddington proposals.
Vic - \$9m (of \$12m) to look into the Western Ring Road congestion.
SA - \$3m (of \$4m) to look into congestion.
WA - \$3m (of 3.5m) to look into Perth airport approaches,
Qld - \$13m (of \$18m) to look into the Bruce Hwy.
Qld - \$10m (of \$20m) to look into the Gateway Motorway.

By my calculations this is \$48m (total of \$86m) for roads and only \$27.5m (total of \$46.5m) for rail and other measures for the 08/09 period. The big winner for PT here is the NSW Metro but I would like to see the justification for these huge ‘study’ sums – is the money being spent soundly without unnecessary duplication?

Local Government gets \$1.86 billion of which \$571.5 million has to be spent on roads (plus SA gets an extra \$14.2 m to spend on roads). \$1.3 billion is untied and can be spent on services including more on roads. Why not tie, say \$700

million, to local PT initiatives and let the councils spend the rest as they choose?

Regional Australia gets \$176 million for community and sports centres, main street revitalisation, and also for community transport projects.

The big one is the Building Australia Fund which gets \$20 billion. Much of this will go to road, (freight) rail and broadband but you could start to think about how to design sustainable cities as the last point in the last media release stated: *‘Improve the functioning of and quality of life within our major cities and major regional centres.’*

Infamously, the budget did not tackle the inducements to drive to, and park at, work. The next budget will be too close to the next election. I doubt if we will see another chance until there is a change of government. For a government that takes the pose of being concerned about air pollution and climate change, and moans about congestion, it’s hard to fathom why, in the 08/09 budget, they would commit so much money to road building and the car industry and so little to public transport.

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*“The road funding, however, is minuscule compared with the \$20 billion Building Australia Fund. The fund, to be managed by the Future Fund, is aimed at bankrolling critical projects with high social returns that the states and the private sector deem ‘not possible or practical’. The new Infrastructure Australia unit will complete a national audit by the end of the year and provide a priority list for the states and federal governments to consider in March 2009.”* **Ref: Darren Gray, The Age. 14/5/08**

*“In an era of peal oil, when oil prices have broken through the \$120-a-barrel barrier and are heading for \$200, it is crazy to encourage car dependence through tax concessions on company car use, costing \$1.5 billion this year.”*

**Ref: Kenneth Davidson, The Age. 14/5/08**

*“Inadequate or poorly planned infrastructure also produces a social cost. For example, as a result of urban congestion at least one in ten working parents are spending more time commuting in their car than at home with their kids.” “Already at least one in ten working parents are estimated to be spending longer in their cars commuting to and from work than at home with their children.” “The Rudd Labor Government plans to spend nearly \$2.2 billion to upgrade the Bruce Highway over the next five years.”*

**Ref: Budget 08/09 Media Statements 13/5/08**

## Melbourne City Parking

*"The latest figures from VicRoads show about 40,000 people travel to work in the centre of the city by car each day. The [City of Melbourne] council's aim is to reduce the number of people driving to work in the CBD to one in 10; currently it is about one in four."*

**Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age. 15/5/08**

*"The Government has also revealed that the tax on about 50,000 city car park spaces is being handled by the Department of Treasury, not the Department of Transport or VicRoads. ... The levy on long-stay car parking spaces has raised \$100 million for the Government and Melbourne City Council and, according to budget papers, the charge of \$820 on each car park space will add almost \$40 million to state coffers next financial year. The council receives \$5 million a year from the tax, and the rest is used by the Government for 'transport initiatives and road upgrades'."*

**Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age. 14/5/08**

**Comment:** Assuming the figures are correct, the VicRoads' figure of 40K looks like more than an underestimation given that sometimes additional people travel in each car, many workers use on-street parking and there must be many private car spaces that are not taxed. I'd like to see the real figures if anyone has them. Incidentally more 'road upgrades' just encourages further cars and sooner or later more congestion, hence the need for extra tax.

## Bike Hire in Brisbane

*"Brisbane looks set to become the first Australian capital city to join several European centres in introducing a public bike hire scheme, with the city's council launching a call for proposals for the project at the weekend. Lord Mayor Campbell Newman said the scheme would be similar to the Paris and Barcelona models. ... 'There'll be bike (stations) every 300m in the inner parts of Brisbane and in terms of the price structure, it could be similar to Paris, where the first half-hour is free'. Mr Newman said the initial stage of the project would have 2000 bikes at 150 stations across inner-city Brisbane, from Newstead in the inner-north to the University of Queensland at St Lucia in the city's southwest."*

**Ref: Sara Elks, The Australian, 19/5/08**

## Feedback

"A tram running wholly on LaTrobe Valley brown coal generates between 4.5 and 6 Kg per Km; but Victoria's average demand is well above the capacity of the LaTrobe Valley power stations. On the current mix of brown coal, black coal (from NSW), gas, hydro and other renewables the actual emission is between 4 Kg/Km and 5.25 Kg/Km.

"The available figures are a bit dodgy (DOT are waiting for MyKi to work in order to find out the average distance travelled per passenger) but the average passenger load is about 30 per tram or Light Rail Vehicle, making the average emissions per tram passenger between 130 and 170 gm/pass-Km. This is comparable to a hybrid or Euro diesel car and well below the average car. In peak periods with 100 or more passengers in a tram, cars simply don't compete. Roskam (I think – might have been Moran) claimed on the ABC that trams 'were 100 times more greenhouse polluting than cars'. He may have believed it: to work for the IPA or CIS you have to be able to believe five impossible things before breakfast; but it would be a pity if any of the audience did.

"You may have also noticed Roads Minister Tim Pallas's claim that '88 per cent of public transport journeys are made on the roads'. The only way to come to this figure is to count drivers or vehicles and ignore passengers. In fact about 47 per cent of all metropolitan public transport journeys are made by train and when weighted by distance this rises to between 60 and 80 per cent."

**Ref: John M. Legge, 14/5/08**

## Yarra Trams

**Comment:** In case it was not clear from the initial information on the current tram works in St Kilda Road, the third track to the south of the new stop is to facilitate turning trams without impeding through trams, whilst the third track to the north of the stop is to facilitate shunting trams before the busy Federation Square stop.

## And Also ...

*"Lithuania's main airline is to change the code number under which its shares are listed to get rid of sixes at the end - giving way to a Christian tradition identifying the number 666 as a cipher for the Antichrist."*

**Ref: The Age. 28/2/08**



## Ferries, Property Values & Stress

"Sydneyiders are deeply attached to a unique way of travel.... The ferries may be ailing but they remain a popular means of travel. They are also a more relaxing way to commute in a city notorious for traffic snarls. They are a boon to property prices, too. Gareth Axtens, principal of Raine & Horne Neutral Bay, says buyers love the romance of ferries. 'Proximity to a ferry wharf can substantially boost a property's value - often adding as much as 15 per cent to the selling price,' he says.

"Jason Smith of valuers Herron Todd White [said] 'Suburbs such as Manly, Balmain and Rose Bay have a little more attitude... The ferries offer a positive experience for people who live in those suburbs. It is one of those warm, fuzzy types of public transport'.

"There are obvious psychological benefits, too. 'People who catch a ferry to work will be less stressed, healthier psychologically and in a better frame of mind as they approach their working day', say life coach Dominic Mapstone. 'Those catching a ferry home from work will have time to wind down from their day, process outstanding concerns and leave their work behind by the time they disembark'."

Ref: Jane-Anne Lee, SMH 21/11/07

## Cycling in Melbourne

"...We have to ask the question: is Melbourne really a bicycle-friendly city or is the dominance of cars here to stay? Over the past 50 years Melbourne, as in the rest of Australia, has developed an addiction to cars. Car ownership has gone up 500%, and cars have pretty much won every major policy battle during that time. ... But are we ready for more cyclists and is our reliance on cars so entrenched that we won't be able to change it? Melbourne has great cycling assets — it is flat, it has great weather (compared with Europe at least) and long straight roads. It should be the cycling capital of Australia." Ref: Rod Moodie, The Age. 7/3/08

## And Also ...

Paul McCartney is "being criticised for having a hybrid Japanese car flown to him in Britain rather than having it sent by ship. It must have seemed like a good idea at the time. ... But environmentalists quickly pointed out that the use of a cargo plane to deliver the car to England completely offset any environmental gains resulting from the car's use."

Ref: AP, Brisbane Times. 15/5/08

## Brisbane Ferries

"MetroLink Brisbane Ferries current service performance has seen patronage increase 78 per cent since commencement of contract and on-time running for 99 per cent of ferry trips.."

Ref: Transdev-TSL Media Release, 20/3/08

**Comment:** The operator of the Brisbane ferry service, MetroLink, won the 'Operator and Service Provider Excellence' category at the Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (IPA) National Infrastructure Awards 2008, presented in March this year. The Victorian Premier provided the Annual Oration (see below). Perhaps the Premier could 'make the connection' for Melbourne and Geelong and put ferry infrastructure on the agenda?

## Improving Infrastructure

"I want to talk about the infrastructure challenges that we face as a nation — how we address the infrastructure backlog as well as meet the rapid growth in demand for new infrastructure services. ... This is not to say that our existing infrastructure is poor — it's not. Our infrastructure is generally good. But, it's not good enough — and there's not nearly enough. ... Over the past 5 years, CPI has grown by 2.8% a year and real GDP by 3.2% a year. Over the same time period:

- The number of 20-foot equivalent unit containers shipped from Australian ports has grown by an average of 9.1% per annum.
- New car sales have been growing at a rate of 6.1% per annum.
- Public transport patronage has been growing at a rate of more than 5% a year, and more than 7% a year in Melbourne and Brisbane.
- Air passenger movements are growing at a rate of 8.4% per annum.
- The number of people diagnosed with diabetes has increased by 12% a year. ...

Infrastructure is not the sole responsibility of any one level of government or stakeholder. It is a shared responsibility. The onus is on all Governments, all industry and all communities to ensure we have the infrastructure we need. ... The bottom line is that if Australia wants to secure its future productivity, liveability and sustainability — we need to ensure the next decade is a decade of action on infrastructure. When it comes to nation building, what matters is not what we say — but what we do." Ref: John Brumby, Premier of Victoria, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia Annual Oration, 19/3/08

## And Also ...

Seen on a t-shirt in Melbourne: 'Every time you buy an SUV God kills a polar bear'.