

## So Who's Behind the Road Tunnel?

"Lord Mayor John So has broken ranks with Melbourne City Council and thrown his support behind the plan for a road tunnel linking the Eastern Freeway to the western suburbs. The City of Melbourne's powerful planning committee unanimously rejected a draft council response to Sir Rod Eddington's transport proposal at a meeting last week. Cr So was absent from the meeting after leading a 10-day business and council delegation to China, India and Japan. Two other councillors unable to attend last week's meeting, Cr Catherine Ng and Cr Fiona Snedden, told *The Age* they would oppose the controversial \$9 billion tunnel proposal, which left the Lord Mayor as the only supporter in Town Hall. ... The east-west tunnel shapes a key issue at November's council elections, amid concerns that the project will usurp public parks and contribute to traffic chaos during its 10-year construction. The council will vote on the proposed tunnel on June 24, although the State Government will have the final decision."

**Ref: Cameron Houston, The Age 10/6/08**

## Traffic Lights Up

"Traffic signal cycles are set to speed up by 10 to 15 seconds across the central business district, under a Melbourne City Council proposal. The move will give trams, cyclists and pedestrians more opportunities to cross intersections, but also increase the number of red lights for motorists. The council will need to wait until August to implement the proposal, but the Planning Committee unanimously carried a motion on Tuesday night agreeing 'to the objective of introducing 75 or 80-second traffic signal cycle time in the CBD'. Traffic lights in the city currently run in 90-second cycles with some 120-second cycles at major intersections, such as King and Flinders streets. An initial report by the committee's principal traffic engineer found 'the reduction in cycle time from 90 to 80, 75 or 60 seconds would ... provide more opportunities for pedestrian, cyclist and public transport movements at an intersection'. The report, requested by Greens councillor Fraser Brindley, also found that while shortening traffic light cycles would provide more opportunities for hook and left turns, it would reduce vehicle capacity by 6.3%. .... Cr Brindley said motorists would be adversely affected by the changes. 'We need to start favouring sustainable transport', he said. 'The motive is to create a city that works for pedestrians, trams and cyclists. In doing so you create less favourable conditions for cars'."

**Ref: Lucy Battersby, The Age 6/6/08**

## Call to Ban Petrol Cars in Adelaide

"A South Australian MP is urging that Adelaide move toward being a petrol-free zone. Democrats MLC Sandra Kanck says rising oil prices are a sign that the city should shift to environmentally-friendly transport and phase out petrol-run cars. She says there are measures the SA Government should phase in by 2012, including better facilities for cyclists and more stringent parking limits for petrol cars. 'We have to have a whole range of things in place, for instance you know we would have more spaces available for hybrid cars and electric cars and cut down parking for petrol-powered cars', she said. 'We can do things like allow more car parks for people who car pool'."

**Ref: ABC News 19/6/08**

## Car Use Reduction in Auckland

"Figures for last month, given to the [NZ] Weekend Herald by Transit NZ, show traffic on the city's motorways in peak hours is down an estimated 3 per cent since May last year. That translates to a reduction of more than 6000 cars a day on some of the system's busiest stretches. In the same period, Auckland's population rose by about 23,000, from 1,394,000 to about 1,417,000. Automobile Association spokesman Simon Lambourne said it was apparent high petrol prices were forcing people to change their driving habits. ... He warned against using the reduction as a reason to cut spending on Auckland's motorways. But Campaign for Better Transport convener Cameron Pitches said people were changing habits, avoiding unnecessary trips, car-pooling and taking their daily commute into account when moving house. Heavy investment was needed in public transport to reflect those changes. 'Auckland is spending about \$100 million a month on fuel. And that's money draining straight out of our economy'. Huge investment and new services

in Auckland's public transport system are also being touted as big reasons for Aucklanders' changing habits. ... Electrification of the rail system and converting [the main Auckland terminal] Britomart to a through-station would enable passenger numbers to increase from 6 million a year now to 38 million, at a cost of about \$2 billion."

**Ref: Craig Borley, New Zealand Herald, 21/6/08**



**'Cheer up. You could be back in Melbourne. Still sitting, at traffic lights.'**

### Past Its 'Use-by Date'?

*"The RACV has deceived its members by constantly claiming that petrol will not rise very much higher than whatever it happened to be at the time. In the middle of 2004, for instance, it claimed oil had peaked at about \$US44.50 a barrel and we would not need to pay much more than \$1.08 a litre. With oil now around \$US130 a barrel and the price at the pump exceeding \$1.60, Victorians have a right to ask why the RACV got it so wrong.*

*"Serious oil supply limitations are the central cause of the skyrocketing petrol price. Consider the following facts: The year in which the most oil was discovered was 1964. Since then, geologists have been searching the globe, but finding less and less each year. We now consume four barrels of oil for every one discovered. It's a little bit like telling your financial planner you have been spending four times more money than you have been earning, and this has been going on for several decades.*

*"Yet despite these facts, published for many years by the world's leading energy agencies and Big Oil, the RACV continues to haggle over a couple of cents a litre. This will look even sillier if Goldman Sachs analyst Arjun Murti is correct in his prediction that oil could cost \$US200 a barrel in as little as six months. According to our analysis, that would put the pump price at about \$2.33 a litre, depending on the exchange rate.*

*"The RACV has also let down its members by continuing to urge the Government to subsidise the biofuel industry. This has been a major reason for spiralling food prices. Land once used to grow crops such as rice and wheat is being converted to fuel. This has led the United Nations top adviser on food to demand a halt to biofuel investment. The RACV has ignored the fact that its members are also consumers of food. The RACV's constant campaigning for biofuel subsidies will lead to pain at the pantry, as well as the pump.*

*"The RACV is in a difficult position. It came into being when car ownership was low and good-quality roads were few and far between. In its 100-year-plus history, there has been an astronomical rise in car ownership, length of paved roads, fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Now governments around the world are trying to fight climate change and scrape the bottom of the oil barrel.*

*"The RACV needs to accept this reality and either step aside, so real solutions can be brought to the table, or adapt and advocate practical, sustainable solutions. It could start by suggesting that a portion of the fuel excise be put towards a sustainable transport infrastructure fund - to build first-class rail and cycle networks. Giving Victorians attractive alternatives to the car is the sensible way to beat pain at the pump."*

**Ref: Elliot Fishman, Business Age, 13/6/08**

### Hydrogen Cars

*"Honda has begun commercial production of its new zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell car. The FCX Clarity - a midsize four-seat sedan which runs on hydrogen and electricity - emits only water vapour and none of the gases believed to be responsible for global warming. Honda says the vehicle offers two times better fuel efficiency than a gas-electric hybrid and three times that of a traditional petrol-powered vehicle. The car will initially be available for lease next month to a limited number of customers in southern California and then in Japan later this year. One of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of wider adoption of fuel cell vehicles is cost and the lack of hydrogen fuelling stations." Ref: Takanezawa, AP, The West Australian, 16/6/08*

*"But the CSIRO's Low Emissions Transport Leader David Lamb said roads full of hydrogen-powered cars were still decades off. Mr Lamb said hydrogen fuel was much more expensive than fossil fuels, and there was no infrastructure, such as hydrogen service stations, to support the large-scale roll-out of hydrogen-powered vehicles. While hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe, capturing, distributing, and storing it would be complex and costly, he said. Mr Lamb said while hydrogen should be the ultimate future fuel, it could not solve the immediate problems of greenhouse emissions and oil shortages. 'Hydrogen was 40 years away 40 years ago. It's still 40 years away', he said." Ref: Anna Salleh, ABC Science Online, ABC News, 16/6/08*

### What do you get when you cross a ...?



## Electric Bikes in NSW

*"They might look like a solution to the rising oil price and global warming, but a court ruling has found some motorised bicycles cannot be legally used on NSW roads - even though the Roads and Traffic Authority previously advised owners they could. As many as 10,000 such bikes, known as E-bikes, may have been sold in NSW on the basis that they did not require registration, and all users had to do was wear a helmet and obey the road rules. The law specifies that 'pedal cycles' with 'one or more auxiliary propulsion motors' up to 200 watts do not require registration.*

*"In May last year, Deborah Alice Matheson was riding her Eazyride bike on a street in Nyngan at about 30 kilometres an hour, using its motor, when she was stopped by police. She told them the RTA had told her that the bike did not need to be registered, but she was charged with driving an unregistered vehicle. She was convicted at Nyngan local court this year and fined \$500. Last Thursday week, the Supreme Court upheld the verdict, without recording a conviction. Justice Peter Johnson found the magistrate who found Ms Matheson guilty had not erred in ruling that the bike motor was not 'auxiliary' but primary, and its pedal power was secondary. ...*

*"The director of the bicycle company Eazy Ride, Trevor Patrick, was dismayed by the Supreme Court's decision and has closed his business. He said he had received advice from two senior RTA officials suggesting that E-bikes did not have to be registered and could be used like bicycles. 'If anyone in this state is entitled to believe she's been denied natural justice it's Mrs Matheson', he said. An RTA spokeswoman denied the organisation had ever advised that E-bikes could be used without registration. ...*

*"One cyclist, Craig Donarski, has been riding his electric bicycle to work almost every day for two years. He says the trip from Lilyfield to Circular Quay takes him 22 minutes, and it costs him about 10cents to 12cents a week in electricity to charge the batteries on his bike. 'It's the cheapest form of transport past the pushbike ... It makes bike travel possible for people who don't have the levels of fitness or strength to ride a normal pushbike. It just seems absurd ... when we are worrying about anything from peak oil to greenhouse gases to parking, to make these things illegal'."*

**Ref: Geesche Jacobsen, SMH, 16/6/08**

## Bike Tolls in NSW

*"They are smaller and lighter than cars, and produce fewer emissions, but their riders pay the same road tolls as the drivers of heavier gas-guzzlers. Now motorcyclists are fighting back with a demand the State Government reward them for making less impact on the roads and the environment. A proposal by the Greens, backed by the Motorcycle Council of NSW, would give riders lower tolls and better parking in congested areas. Motorcyclist Colin Dawson, who helped formulate the policy, said a trip to North Sydney from his Bella Vista home near Blacktown cost him \$3 in petrol but \$14 in tolls for the M2 and the Lane Cove Tunnel. He said it simply made no sense to charge identical tolls for motorcycles and cars: 'It's insane the toll for a 200-kilogram bike is the same as for a three-tonne four-wheel-drive'."*

**Ref: Lisa Carty, SMH, 15/6/08**

## Traffic Pollution and Health

*"German researchers say they have found some of the strongest evidence yet linking traffic pollution to childhood allergies. The risk of developing asthma, hay fever, eczema or other allergies is about 50 per cent higher for children living 50 metres from a busy road than for those living 1,000 metres away, they said in a study. Previous research has linked pollution to allergies, but to date observational studies in the field have been inconsistent, said Joachim Heinrich, an epidemiologist at the Helmholtz Research Centre for Environment and Health in Munich. 'We consistently found strong associations between the distance to the nearest main road and the allergic disease outcomes', Heinrich, who led the study, wrote in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. The study followed 3,000 healthy children in Munich for six years from birth to determine rates of allergy-related diseases and exposure to traffic pollution. The researchers mapped each residential address and the distance to busy roads, then developed a model to calculate exposure to pollution at birth and age two, three and six. A busy road was considered one used by 10,000 cars each day. 'We developed a model to predict air pollution concentration at one point in a metropolitan area'. ... This allowed the researchers to monitor more than one site as well as follow a large group of children over a long period of time, things many other studies did not do, Heinrich said. The researchers will continue monitoring the children over the next few years to determine whether moving to a less-polluted area can reverse any of the traffic pollution-related problems, he added."*

**Ref: AAP, SBS World News, 14/6/08**

## Problems with Oil

*"Today I introduced legislation into Parliament which will increase the maximum amount of financial compensation available in the event of a major oil spill from an oil tanker. The Protection of the Sea Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 will increase the amount of compensation available to those who have established a claim for damages from approximately A\$350 million to about A\$1.3 billion. In the event of a major oil spill, this compensation may be used to fund the clean-up costs and help with the recovery of affected marine environments and coastal communities. In the unlikely event that an incident involving an oil tanker occurred, the measures provided for in this Bill will ensure that victims of oil pollution damage are able to obtain prompt, adequate and effective compensation.*

*"In recent years, significant oil spills overseas have proven that the maximum amount of compensation afforded under the current scheme is insufficient. For examples, in the Nakhodka oil spill off the coast of Japan in 1997, the Erika spill off France in 1999 and the Prestige spill off Spain in 2002 the funds available under the existing scheme proved insufficient, with claimants unable to get the full amount of their approved compensation.*

*"Every year some 3,500 cargo vessels as well as more than 200 oil tankers and chemical carriers navigate through Australian waters, including near environmental icons such as Queensland's Great Barrier Reef and Western Australia's Ningaloo Reef. A significant oil spill would be devastating to these fragile marine ecosystems. That's why the Rudd Government is acting swiftly and decisively to strengthen the legislative approach to protecting Australia's pristine marine environment from pollution.*

*"To date, Australia has suffered several notable marine incidents involving oil tankers: The Princess Anne-Marie off the West Australian coast in July 1975 when approximately 15,000 tons of crude oil was spilt; and The Kirki also off the West Australian coast in July 1991, when approximately 18,000 tons of crude oil was released after the bow fell off the vessel."* **Ref: Anthony Albanese, Media Statement, 18/6/08**

*"A Washington Post/ABC poll yesterday showed 80 per cent of respondents saying that petrol prices were causing them hardship. The issue is now ranked as more important than terrorism, education, taxes and family values."*

**Ref: Tom Baldwin, The Australian, 18/6/08**

## Sustainable Design in New Zealand



**Bus Station at the Auckland Technology Park**

*"We've always taken our environmental responsibilities seriously at Smales Farm Technology Office Park. Green values are central to the park's philosophy. They will play an increasingly important role in its future sustainable development. People can see with their own eyes we've built a low impact development with plenty of open space that blends seamlessly into the urban landscape. We've also built smart, elegant buildings that are rich with green technologies such as rain water recycling and chilled beam air conditioning.*

*"Our green transport strategy is less visible. In fact, the important part is what you don't see: traffic congestion. On a regional level Smales Farm has taken traffic congestion pressure off Auckland's central business district. Building a substantial employment hub in North Shore City next to the Northern Motorway and adjacent to key arterial roads also means there are considerably fewer journeys over the harbour bridge bottleneck each working day. Locally, now the park population has grown to over 3000 workers we are now developing a local transport strategy to avoid congestion around the park. Our goal is to get workers to and from the site quickly, safely and comfortably but with minimum disruption to everyone else living and working in North Shore City. We've been helped in this task by the recently-opened Northern Busway and the Smales Farm Bus Station situated on the north-west corner of the park is a significant asset. Every morning hundreds of workers are whisked past motorway snarl-ups as they travel directly to Smales Farm."* **Ref: Chris Smale (and picture) Innovation Newsletter May 08**

## And Also ...

*"[NSW] Transport Minister John Watkins says he recognises that not every commuter is happy with the rail system."*

**Ref: ABC News 26/5/08: 'Angry commuter gives RailCorp head an earful'**