

Major Cities Unit

"If Australia is to maintain our prosperity, our cities must become more productive, more competitive, more innovative. At the same time they must be sustainable. ... To make our cities more liveable and to improve the quality of life and sense of community for all who live in them. For this to happen we must have a long term vision for our cities. ... Meeting the climate change challenge requires a whole of government approach which must include the planning of our cities. We must engage in the debate about the impact of alternative urban policy visions on climate change. For example, this is an important context when we are debating the planning of higher density housing alongside better public transport corridors. Or considering decentralised commercial centres which minimise the need for people to travel long distances to work, and provide community infrastructure where people live. ..."

"That's why the Government has created the Major Cities Unit which is attached to Infrastructure Australia. This initiative puts the Federal Government squarely back in the business of urban policy and planning. The Major Cities Unit will provide advice to the Government on urban development, public transport improvements and other issues affecting the productivity, competitiveness, sustainability and liveability of Australia's cities. It will enable consideration of urban policies in their proper context. Consideration of transport, energy, water, communications and community infrastructure networks as a whole, rather than as unconnected issues. ..."

"The first objective of the Major Cities Unit is to improve productivity through action to reduce urban congestion and ensure people and goods move efficiently across our cities – key drivers of the national economy. Sustainability is the second objective. ... The third objective, liveability, will ensure communities are better planned around jobs, families, public transport options, schools, services, shops and parks. ... In particular, we know that to really make a difference we need reform and action on the ground, in our neighbourhoods and our local communities. ... We have provided \$75 million for state governments to undertake a series of extensive studies on projects that have the potential to unblock city roads."

Ref: Extracts from an address by Federal Minister Anthony Albanese to the Global Cities 08 Conference in Sydney, 22/10/08

Comment: We congratulate Minister Albanese and the Federal Government for vigorously pursuing this policy – but the alarm bells ring with the classic 'Hollow Men speak' – talking about sustainable cities while at the same time funding major road projects with billions of dollars. A test will be on how much of the \$20b Infrastructure Fund goes on road projects. Even much of the Major Cities Studies \$75m is going to projects like the M5 in Sydney, the road tunnel in Melbourne, the Gateway Motorway missing links in Brisbane, and the Bruce Highway in northern Queensland.

Incidentally I have been advocating for a sustainable cities program for several years. Here is an extract from Issue 30 of the House of Representatives (Federal Parliament) Magazine:

"We are stuck in dysfunctional cities, according to the Member for Reid (NSW), Laurie Ferguson. Speaking in the House of Representatives, Mr Ferguson said we need to start reassessing our over-reliance on motor vehicles, which is contributing significantly to pollution, congestion, loss of amenity and social exclusion in our cities. Mr Ferguson suggested that consideration be given to the establishment of a sustainable cities authority that will work with existing federal, state, territory and local government bodies and agencies to seek out and encourage innovative and sustainable transport solutions. He said it's an idea put forward by Stephen Ingrouille from the Going Solar environmental consultancy, with whom Mr Ferguson recently met. 'In effect, this will be a 'better cities program' that also aids rural and regional areas,' Mr Ferguson said. 'Under this proposal a sustainable cities authority would ultimately have offices in every state and territory. The SCA would work with existing departments in each region, including transport, tourism, infrastructure, planning, environment, sustainability, health and regional development. Each regional SCA would interact with and seek advice from local technical and community organisations, as well as other relevant government agencies.' Mr Ferguson said the solution is not to throw money at the problem but is more to do with the initial design of new suburbs and the renovation of existing suburban areas. 'This task is currently outside the expertise of our existing agencies', he said."

Ref: About the House #30, March 2007



Parliament House, Canberra
Photo: www.ajug.org.au

Liveable Cities

"What makes a liveable city?"

1. A liveable city has walkable, mixed use, higher-density, mixed-income neighbourhoods where it is a pleasant, short walk to a store, an office, a transit stop, a friends' house, a school or a park.
2. A liveable city has vibrant, exciting, sociable, human-scaled pedestrian experiences.
3. A liveable city has little or no wide, multi-lane, high-speed highway and road infrastructure within its central area. And few, if any, one-way streets ... or cul-de-sacs.
4. A liveable city has modest, traffic-calmed, tree-lined streets with on-street parking. Few, if any, roads are larger than 3 lanes in size.
5. A liveable city has high-quality public squares and public parks.
6. A liveable city has quality, locally-owned cuisine -- some of which feature outdoor cafes found on a vibrant sidewalk.
7. A liveable city has quality transit. The service is frequent and easy to use.
8. A liveable city has a quality nightlife. The city does not close down at 5 pm.
9. A liveable city has quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities and a large number of bicyclists and pedestrians. Life without a car is perfectly possible and enjoyable.
10. A liveable city has little in the way of surface parking -- particularly FREE off-street parking.
11. A liveable city has a compact downtown full of higher-density housing and diverse retail.
12. A liveable city has quality culture (entertainment, speeches, arts, etc.) and a quality university.
13. A liveable city has a high degree of civic pride, and a tradition of working to protect their unique, treasured features.
14. A liveable city has magnificent historic architecture.
15. A liveable city has little in the way of ... noise pollution."

Ref: Dom Nozi See: www.walkablestreets.com/

India's Motorised Mayhem

"It is an unenviable title - but India's motorised mayhem has officially made it the most dangerous place to drive in the world. Last year road accidents claimed more than 130,000 lives, overtaking China, where fatalities have dropped to less than 90,000, and prompted a government review into traffic safety, which until now has been best summed up by local drivers as 'good horns, good brakes, good luck'.



Indian police crackdown on seat belt compliance

"Ministers are considering a range of new measures such as making air bags and anti-braking systems mandatory in all cars. Lorries may also be fitted with speed breakers in a bid to bring down fatalities. However, many experts say that new laws will have little effect in India, where seat belts are rarely worn and where no one can anticipate with any certainty the behaviour of the average road user. Nor can most road users guess what type of vehicle they will face. Delhi

alone has 48 different 'modes of transport' including cows, elephants and camels, as well as cycle-rickshaws and SUVs.

"Rohit Baluja of Delhi's Institute of Road Traffic Education said: 'The real issue is not car design but road design. About 85% of all deaths on the roads are pedestrians and cyclists, not drivers. We do not design traffic management systems to separate different streams of traffic. In America this began in 1932'. He called for proper regulation of driver training and licensing to prevent members of the public buying licences through bribes. The lack of knowledge about road basics is illustrated by the fact that there are 110 million traffic violations a day in Delhi alone. The Geneva-based International Road Federation estimates that India already accounts for about 10% of the million-plus fatal accidents in the world each year. Figures produced by the Indian government put the social cost of accidents at 2% to 3% of GDP every year."

Ref: Randeep Ramesh, *The Guardian*, 11/10/08

And Also ...

"Remember when Jimmy Carter was President and he had a brother Billy, well Billy owned a petrol station and he used to sit around the bowlers - smoking! Well John McCain has a brother, Joe, and Joe was recently stuck in traffic, and after a while he got fed up and called 911, you know, his own personal emergency - being stuck in traffic. And 911 said 'you can't call 911 for being stuck in traffic', so Joe swore at them and hung up. And 911 rang him back, because they knew where he was - stuck in traffic; and Joe swore at them again. Finally this election is getting interesting."

Ref: David Letterman, *The Late Show*, 30/10/08

TOD in Sydney

"More than 22,000 future residents of Green Square are to be moved around the massive urban renewal site on a high-capacity bus or light rail service under plans being considered by the State Government and the City of Sydney Council. ... But if the council gets its way, the proposed 'transit loop' would eventually be constructed as a light rail system, which would link to the existing light rail network at Central station. ... In a submission to Infrastructure Australia, the council claims it is 'critical' to install world-class transport for 'the nation's largest urban renewal area'."

Ref: Linton Besser, SMH, 23/10/08

New Sydney Metro

"Just three weeks after announcing that the State Government was seeking money from the Federal Government for the western metro, [NSW Premier] Mr Rees changed tack today, saying he had met Infrastructure Australia representatives and asked them for funding for a CBD metro line. Mr Rees has asked the Federal Government to fully fund the CBD project under their Infrastructure Australia program. Construction on the CBD line would begin in 2010, one year before the next election. The metro line would service Town Hall station, Martin Place, Wynyard, Barangaroo, Pyrmont and Rozelle. Plans would then emerge as to an 'extension to Macquarie Park and Epping as a second phase' or a 'future West Metro as an Alternate second phase'." **Ref: Andrew Clennell and Alexandra Smith, SMH, 24/10/08**

"Premier Nathan Rees's proposal for a new central metro that will deliver much needed transport infrastructure to the good people of Rozelle is a bold and visionary plan. In fact it is probably the best vision for Sydney transport since Morris lemma unveiled his plan for a north west metro, which was only slightly overshadowed by the subsequent plan to build a western metro instead. But neither of these can compare with the Carr government's Parramatta to Chatswood rail link, which is probably the best transport plan this columnist has ever seen. The only thing to rival it would be the fast trains to Newcastle and Wollongong, which have slashed theoretical travel times in half. Indeed, one could mount a strong argument that Sydney has the best rail network in the world - a smooth, comprehensive and integrated system that is only slightly undermined by the fact that it doesn't exist. ... The Government has failed to construct a single one of the five cornerstones of Sydney transport in the five-year plan. And this was not a document the Government wrote with

a gun to its head. . . these were the goals it set itself. The closest it has come is to build half of the Chatswood to Parramatta rail link, which now only goes to Epping and still costs almost double the original figure and is more than two years late. Moreover it has been revealed that half of RailCorp's fleet can't use it because it is too steep and that the aural ambience of the journey will be a large scale simulation of sticking your head in a blender. ... Speaking of which, one fun fact to bring up in dinner party conversation is that the proposal for a Sydney metro system was in fact first raised in 2002 by respected rail guru Ron Christie. This was immediately recognised as a comprehensive, vital and forward thinking plan by the Government, which took swift and decisive action to bury the report and never speak of it again for six years."

Ref: Joe Hildebrand, Daily Telegraph, 27/10/08

Comment: This couldn't happen in sunny Melbourne to the ferry proposal, or ... could it?

Meantime in Melbourne

"The history of public transport to Doncaster:

- Rail connection first discussed in 1890.
- Rail link in Metropolitan Transport Study 1969.
- Rail reservation set aside with Eastern Freeway 1971.
- Works commenced but discontinued 1974.
- Commuter buses now run from park and ride site at Bulleen."

Ref: Suzie Strain, MTF email, 21/10/08

But Some Good News ...

"Public transport on Sundays will be free ... for carers and people receiving disability pensions in Victoria. If you would like to take up the Victorian Government's offer you need to obtain a Sunday Pass Metcard, which is valid on trains, trams and buses travelling in metropolitan Melbourne and also on town bus services in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. ... 'As an added bonus, two off-peak free travel vouchers will be provided to use on the metropolitan and V/Line transport network. This will help around 160,000 Victorians who are on fixed incomes and may not use public transport regularly due to cost constraints'. Application forms will be available at premium train stations, staffed V/Line stations, The MetShop and Metcard agents...' Ms Kosky said. 'Customers can apply for their Sunday Pass on the spot at railway stations or mail in a form and receive their Sunday Pass in 14 days. ... Application forms can also be downloaded and printed off from the Metlink website : www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au "

Ref: Respite & Carelink Centre, 23/10/08

Source: City of Casey & Department of Transport

Auckland Transport Proposal

"Aucklanders have been voting with their feet. Bus and rail patronage increased dramatically once the North Shore Busway came on stream and rail services were improved through double-tracking the western line. But we need much more and [roads are] still given priority over better public transport, or walking and cycling facilities. We want to change this. There are so many reasons for making it easier for people to leave their cars at home. Higher fuel prices ... as the world-wide demand for oil outstrips supply. Without alternatives to the car people will be increasing prevented from getting to their jobs, visiting family, or engaging in their chosen recreation. Emissions from cars are a major contributor to climate change. The less we use them the better. Trains, buses, ferries and cycles are more environmentally friendly. Much of Auckland's pollution comes from having too many cars on the roads ..."

"The Greens Transport Plan for Auckland is based on building a triple-loop rapid transit system that connects all four corners with the centre of the city and provides access to the major industrial and commercial areas. All local bus services, cycleways, walkways, and parking facilities will be configured to provide access to the loop system. When you get on the loop you can go anywhere in Auckland. This means Aucklanders, wherever they live, will be able to make their main journey to any part of the city – or the airport - by passenger rail or express bus. [The key points are]:

- ↪ Complete and electrify the rail network.*
- ↪ More buses, better connections.*
- ↪ Bus rapid transit systems.*
- ↪ Extend and improve the ferry network.*
- ↪ Improved walking and cycling options.*
- ↪ Good urban design: One of the keys to reducing carbon emissions is creating communities where most of the things your family needs are available near where you live. The Greens will push for sustainable development and urban design that prevents further urban sprawl and creates liveable local communities.*
- ↪ One transport authority.*
- ↪ One funding stream."*

Ref: Keith Locke, NZ Greens, 14/10/08 Detail: www.greens.org.nz/transport/auckland/plan

Comment: We note the proposal to extend and improve the Auckland ferry network. In San Francisco they are extending their ferry network. There are lessons for Port Phillip Bay planners to learn from both of these cities. (The NZ election is on November 8.)

Feedback: Tram Suggestion

"My suggestion is to get rid of timetables on frequent tram services. Yarra Trams get fined for being too early by 1 minute or late by 6 minutes. It is in their interest to make the timetable as slow as possible so that they can achieve it. If they were encouraged to travel faster and reach the destination quicker, there could be a higher frequency of trams at no extra cost. The timetable would say 'tram every 6 minutes', but they would try for a tram every four minutes. This was done as an experiment on Sydney Road, and was popular with users, but was dropped. Among other things, the Union was concerned that if they went faster, Yarra Trams would cut the number of trams on the route, as they could achieve the level of service with less trams. The new contract would have to be written to ensure that as much service as possible is provided, eg the number of trams per route could not be dropped. However, Yarra Trams, or whoever wins the contract, would get a bonus every time they achieved an extra run above the minimum required by the six minute service, say." **Ref: 'Insider', 23/10/08**



Frankston

Feedback: Frankston Bypass

"I think it needs to be noted that the 'build more roads' mentality, especially the recent Frankston Bypass announcement, is antithetical to everything we are learning about the world at the moment. A common rebuttal to objections has been that this stretch of land has been earmarked for several decades and all they are doing is delivering on what has always been intended ... a large freeway. The issue lies in the fact that this project is proceeding based on 1970's thinking ... but we are now living in 2008 and in a vastly different world with hopefully a far deeper understanding and wisdom when it comes to these strategic projects. As we emerge from the fog and see the cliffs ahead we need to change our direction. Unfortunately it would seem that no-one of influence in government has thought to challenge this, which is extraordinary given the fact that we now have enormous volumes of evidence and case studies that demonstrate that this dated thinking is incredibly damaging to our urban fabric, our lifestyles and most significantly, the environment. As with many of these large infrastructure projects, the consultation process is tokenistic and feedback is ignored, and so we still find ourselves pedal to the floor constructing a 70's utopia that defies all contemporary knowledge." **Ref: 'Professional', 29/10/08**