

Transport Comparisons

"A report comparing the public transport systems of 52 cities internationally, commissioned by the State Government, has found that only North American cities have worse access to services than Melbourne. And the Public Transport Standards Review, completed by respected transport analysts Booz and Co, has found Melbourne's public transport system performs worse than some Australian capitals in principal areas as well. The report was completed as part of a government transport statement, released last month, & found eastern European cities invested 137 per cent more in public transport per head of population than Melbourne. Western European cities invested 57 per cent more. Only North American cities spent less on public transport per person than Melbourne, according to the report.

"Melbourne is one of the developed world's most car-dependent cities, and the study sheds light on why: relatively poor access to public transport because the city is so spread out, and travel times 26 per cent slower than the car. In cities with excellent public transport systems and worse road congestion — including London, Moscow, Rome and Munich — cars are as much as 50 per cent slower than trains or buses. Western European cities such as Paris, Bern and Rotterdam had up to 13 times more services per urban hectare than Melbourne, which compared badly because of its vast urban sprawl. Premier John Brumby last month guaranteed that the sprawl would continue, announcing a planned expansion of the city's growth boundaries on the north-west and south-east fringes. The Booz and Co study also notes that Melbourne lacks specific and measurable service-standard targets, and that the performance levels mandated by the Government were either 'ambiguous' or 'largely undefined'.

"On the positive side, Melbourne's public transport travels quickly, compared with many international cities. Public transport speeds average 31.7kmh, up to 12 per cent faster than the average train, bus or tram in Western Europe, the Americas or Asia. In national comparisons, Melbourne has the nation's biggest rail network, with 380 kilometres of tracks. Sydney has 353 kilometres and Brisbane 322 kilometres. For most public transport users, frequency is the key — and Melbourne performs

poorly in comparison with Perth, which has a standard 15-minute frequency. But with just 173 kilometres of tracks, Perth's rail network is half the size of Melbourne's. Sydney also has more frequent trains than Melbourne, except at night

and on weekends. And its trains run for far longer, operating almost 24 hours on weekdays. Sydney's trains start at 3.49am and finish at 3.04am the next day. Melbourne's trains begin at 4.35am on weekdays and finish just after midnight. On Sundays, Melbourne's train operating times are the worst of any major Australian city, starting at 7am and finishing at midnight. Melbourne's buses also finish earlier than in other cities, the report found, with many lines running only until 9pm."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 12/1/09



Melbourne train
- after midnight

NSW Metro CEO

"The head of the Roads and Traffic Authority, Les Wielinga, has been appointed chief executive of the new Sydney Metro Authority, in charge of delivering \$13 billion of subways in Sydney. At the RTA, Mr Wielinga oversaw delivery of the M7 and the Lane Cove Tunnel. ... Mr Wielinga is renowned for being wheeled out by the Government to apologise for letdowns in traffic management. He said sorry when the Spit Bridge failed to close in June last year and when the city went into gridlock in February 2007 during the visit of two giant cruise ships."

Ref: Linton Besser, SMH, 21/1/09

Time-of-day Tolling in Sydney

"Sydney motorists are paying more to cross Sydney Harbour during peak times, after the State Government's variable tolling scheme started at midnight. The cost of crossing the Harbour Bridge and Tunnel dropped from \$3.00 to \$2.50 early this morning, but it rose to \$4:00 at 6:30am (AEDT) for the morning peak. The Government says it is aiming to prompt some people to change their travel times or take public transport for trips during peak hours."

Ref: ABC News, 27/1/09

And Also ...

"Nigerian motorcyclists are wearing dried pumpkin shells on their heads after a law was brought in forcing them to wear helmets. Police in the northern city of Kano said they had stopped several bikers with 'improvised helmets' after the law was introduced on New Year's Day."

Ref: The Age 9/1/09

Hypermarkets vs Local Supermarkets

"Since the 1960s the big retail stores and their more recent variations (specialised superstores, maxi-discounts) have spread far and wide across French city suburbs. The average size of these stores has grown steadily as has also their power of attraction. Indeed they tend to be found on the fringes of agglomerations, near bypasses and access to motorways. [The linked] article seeks to describe the shopping habits of their customers on the basis of 14 surveys carried out among 5,000 domiciled in three urban areas, and it leads to an assessment of the effects of the location of these stores on road traffic as well as concomitant gas emissions. The result of this lengthy evaluation may be summarised in one sentence: carbon dioxide emissions are four times stronger when shopping in a suburban hypermarket than when shopping in a local supermarket." **Ref: Jean-Marie Beauvais, Setting Up Superstores & Climate Change, Dec 2008** <http://www.vtpi.org/superstores.pdf>

Shipping News

"The world's fastest and greenest powerboat docked in Melbourne last night. 'Earthrace' was built to demonstrate the benefits of renewable energy and has circumnavigated the globe in 60 days, smashing the previous record by more than two weeks. It runs completely on animal fat from a Brisbane abattoir. Crew member Justin Beeton said the boat reached 120km/h. 'The hull is a wave piercer', he said. 'All of the fuel is stored in the front of the boat to give it weight so it can cut through the waves.' It also holds the world record for travelling the furthest underwater without being a submarine. 'It has enough power to travel underwater for about 7m', Mr Beeton said."

Ref: Megan McNaught, Herald Sun, 22/1/09
<http://www.earthrace.net/index.php?section=1>



Picture: ABC News, 22/1/09

And Also ...

"In Utah, birds have the right of way on any public highway."

Ref: <http://www.strangefacts.com/laws.html>

The Cycling Industry

"The business of selling and servicing bicycles in Australia has grown dramatically over the last ten years. In 1998, a little over 650,000 bicycles were sold. Almost three times as many bicycles are now sold each year. When these figures are added to the cost of servicing and purchase of accessories, such as helmets and lights, the Australian bicycle industry is worth between \$950 million and \$1 billion in 2008. It is estimated that 6000 Australians are currently employed in the bicycle industry and this number continues to grow. There are around 1500 independent bicycle retailers across Australia (Yellow Pages, 2008) and this number is growing each year. Australia has approximately." **Ref: Cycling Issue Sheet, Bicycle Sales 2008, Cycling Promotion Fund, January 09**

Car Sales

"Official figures show about 77,000 cars were sold last month, which is a rise of 1.8 per cent compared to November. Sales slumped by almost 16 per cent during the year."

Ref: ABC News 22/1/09

Roundabouts

"Many of Debra Mayrhofer's points {reprinted in #94} have the ring of common sense. However, pedestrians get the short end of the deal - especially at roundabouts - one of Mayrhofer's enthusiasms. Roundabouts work extremely well for motorised traffic and reduce delays and pollution, yet they leave pedestrians with no place to go. With large roundabouts, the distances to cross to the next refuge are dangerously wide, and even a small roundabout forces a longer journey for pedestrians. Paris, quoted favourably, has some truly alarming roundabout-type intersections. At the Arc de Triomphe, the tourist gains access like a mole through a nasty, tight little tunnel. Nor are French traffic accident rates anything special; we do better in Australia."

Ref: John McPherson, The Age, 9/1/09

And Also ...

"It has previously been announced by the Queensland Main Roads Department that they would be constructing a traffic round-about at [a Maleny] location to ease traffic congestion and to make the intersection safer. On the night of Monday November 19th some person has beaten the Main Roads Department by providing a round-about in white paint in the suggested area of the officially suggested round-about. Official agencies were quick to remove the unofficial round-about early the following morning."

Ref: Hinterland Grapevine, 23/11/07

Bike Lending

“Errand Bikes, funded by GetAbout Columbia [in the US], are changing the way some Columbia merchants are doing business. Instead of depending on a car for all of their transportation needs, bikes are becoming a popular option. The Errand Bike Program loans new, ready-to-roll bikes to businesses owners or employees so that they can run errands, attend meetings or make deliveries with them. The bikes can also be used to travel back and forth to work to give people the opportunity to try out the bike commuting lifestyle.

“Businesses are allowed to keep the bikes for up to 60 days and if there is not a waiting list they can be kept longer. Janet Godon, PedNet Outreach Coordinator, runs the Errand Bike program and said the goal is to loan the bikes to businesses so they can see if employees will use them for errands, deliveries, meetings or commuting. ‘Because it’s a temporary loan program’, said Godon ‘we hope they use the bike & find it helpful so that they will want to purchase their own or begin riding one from home’.

“That is exactly what happened to Michael Baroli, owner of 9th Street Deli. He received an Errand Bike in September and enjoyed the bike so much that he bought his own for business and personal use. ‘I was too lazy to ride a bike before’, said Baroli. The Errand Bike program showed him that riding a bike was easy and fun. ‘Now I ride my bike every day’. Baroli bought a Journey 6 semi-recumbent bike. ‘I only drive on Sunday’s now to do the heavy errands. Other than that I am on my bike’. Main Squeeze Natural Foods Café has also had an Errand Bike since mid-September and owner Leigh Lockhart has been pleasantly surprised. “We use it a lot more than I thought we would”, she said. ‘Besides bike deliveries, we use it for many errands that we used to walk to do’.

“The Errand Bike has also been saving the business some money. ‘Before the bike we always felt like we need a car here in case we had to make a trip for something we ran out of. Now, we can get to Clover’s on Broadway just as fast as if we had a car’, said Lockhart.”

Ref: Pedestrian & Pedaling Network (PedNet) Columbia, Missouri
www.pednet.org/newsroom/2008/errand-bikes.asp

And Also ...

“In the State of Kansas, you’re not allowed to drive a buffalo through a street.”

Ref: <http://www.strangefacts.com/laws.html>

Yarra Trams Fights Back

“ ‘Cuts on track as trams profit’ (The Age, 13/1) stated that Yarra Trams was spending less on track renewal works. In fact, we have spent 17.5% more on renewal projects than we promised when our current franchise commenced in 2004. We work in regular consultation with the State Government and have honoured or exceeded all of our previously agreed franchise obligations with respect to maintenance and renewals work. In addition to these franchise obligations, Yarra Trams has also project managed the construction of more than 200 platform stops and such once-in-a-generation projects as the major tram infrastructure upgrade in the St Kilda Road Arts Precinct and the Flinders/Swanston Streets project. The significant improvement in Yarra Trams profit which you report in your article results from new business initiatives involved in delivering these complex projects. This activity is completely outside the original scope of running Melbourne’s tram system. Furthermore, a profit sharing mechanism built into our franchise agreement, means that any profit made by the business in providing public transport is shared with the State. By virtue of this, nearly every extra dollar in farebox revenue attributable to the unprecedented growth in public transport patronage has been given back to the State. We have delivered on our promise to provide the people of Victoria with better value for money. Our claimed government subsidy has been halved in the four years of the present franchise from \$42m in 2004/05 to an estimated \$21m in 2008/09. Working closely with the State Government, Yarra Trams is implementing a vision for Melbourne’s tram network which will help to ensure the future liveability of our great city.”

Ref: Dennis Cliche, Yarra Trams Website, 1/09

Tram Fare Evasion Reduction

“When Yarra Trams first began operating approximately half of the network in 1999, fare evasion on trams was estimated at 23%. Metlink’s most recent fare evasion survey result published in August 2008 showed fare evasion on trams was 9.6% in 2007/08, down from 14.2% in 2005/06.”

Ref: Yarra Trams Website, 1/09

And Also ...

“Melbourne trams are fantastic but very crowded. One driver had a system going. He let people in the back door and let them out the front door. We had to shuffle up to the front. By the time I got to the front door I was near my stop. The driver said: ‘Hey mate, have you paid your fare’. I said: ‘Fair go mate, I walked most of the way!’”

Ref: British Comedian Terry North, 23/1/09

The Next Wave (Part 3)

“According to The Natural Edge Project, the next wave is based around sustainability innovations. The Sixth Wave replaces oil and all fossil fuels with radical resource productivity, for example 50% to 80% less fossil fuels by 2050 as many countries are now committed. The new wave also includes renewable energy and distributed, small-scale water, energy and waste systems, building on clever control systems now perfected from the Fifth Wave, all of which are more local and require far less fuel to distribute. The buildings and transport systems at the base of this city will be more and more efficient and more and more electric. It will be an intense green urbanism that I have called the Resilient City.

“This will require redevelopment around centres where short trips to jobs and services, shops and schools are more and more available. The transport that supports such polycentric cities appears to be new electric rail for fast cross-city movement and a series of small scale electric bus and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles with electric storage in their batteries that enable renewables to be 100% of the city. As well, walking and cycling will flourish as they have survived all the city form changes. The polycentric centres and the remaining suburban buildings all need to be renewed as 100% solar-based and with all the eco-technologies of the Sixth Wave.

“What it means in practice is that the building of high capacity roads and urban scatter must cease. High capacity roads just extend the city further out; they are the technology of the past. They do little to make cities focus in ways that can build within the travel time budget limits or within the limits of fossil fuel reductions are required. No further urban expansions that go beyond these limits can happen, and any policy that is designed to kick-start the economy by subsidising scattered land development or large road projects will only further undermine the economy. We must instead use the funds for building the next economy based around the Resilient City.

“The important aspect of the crash for our situation today is that at the transition point between the different waves, the crash was followed by a new boom. But the swing back in the economy was based around the new technologies, not based around propping up of the old systems. The 1890s Depression was severe, as the world cities moved away from horses, wood and the first steam-based coal-fired industries, into the first use of electricity, tramways and electric trains. Then the 1930s

saw the transition to oil and motor vehicles, with cities spreading out as though these could be used in limitless amounts. The crash signals that this era is over and the birth pangs of the new era are emerging in our cities. Investment in the Resilient City needs to be our new objective.”

Ref: Peter Newman, Ockham's Razor, ABC Radio National, 21/12/08 See the full transcript: www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2008/2445159.htm



Cooler Urban Spaces

“Governments are seriously overlooking what city trees can do to reduce water use and fight climate change. This week's scorches have certainly focused the mind on how to stay cool. ...

Adding to [the] workload [of energy-hungry air-conditioners] is the explosion in hard surfaces - patios, pebble gardens, car parks, walls, roads and buildings - that retain heat, causing an urban heat island effect. That is, areas with excessive hard surfaces can experience a temperature spike. While this effect has been known for some time, not so well understood is the extent that trees, shrubs, lawns and wall gardens can cool places. Estimates by the Co-operative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures, for example, are that they can lower temperatures by 2-8 degrees because increases in evapotranspiration reduce building energy use by 7-47 per cent.

“Then there is shading: A Californian study has found that the average electricity saving per tree due to lower air-conditioning use ranges from 70-90 kilowatt hours a year, with savings even greater at peak times reducing overall energy demand by 10 per cent. Melbourne has a rich assortment of trees, shrubs and grassed areas - a resource now widely known as the urban forest. Importantly, much is on private land - it's not just in public parks and along roads and nature strips - so that even in a densely settled locality like East Melbourne 60 per cent is in street blocks.

“This green infrastructure is a legacy of the dedication of generations of gardeners and plenty of rain. As much time and effort and precious water has been invested in the trees alone, they represent an asset that should not be squandered. Greg Moore, of Burnley Horticultural College, has calculated that the 100,000 mature trees in inner Melbourne sequester 1 million tonnes of carbon, worth close to \$20 million. These trees have the capacity to offset the more extreme temperatures and ferocious winds in prospect while helping to mitigate climate change.”

Ref: Peter Fisher, The Age, 23/1/09