

## Switch to Public Transport

*"A growing number of Sydney commuters are abandoning their cars in favour of trains and buses as economic and environmental concerns bite, with experts predicting the start of a fundamental, long-term shift in travel behaviour. Sydneysiders undertook about 22 million more train and bus journeys last year than the year before, and tens of thousands of people have abandoned the two main roads into the city this year. As petrol prices soared and some commuters paid more than \$10 each way in tolls, CityRail experienced a 5.7% increase in patronage - about 17 million individual journeys - from December 2007 to December 2008. There were also 5.6 million more trips on State Transit buses - up 3% - despite the fact that many services, particularly those in the inner city and eastern suburbs, are already packed to capacity. Public transport use is expected to swell further with the long-delayed opening of the Epping to Chatswood rail link tomorrow.*

*"Nationwide research commissioned by Victorian transport authority Metlink shows a growing number of people switched from using cars to public transport last year, due in part to high petrol prices. Among the Sydneysiders surveyed, 62% said they were substituting car use with train, bus, or ferry travel. Figures from the Roads and Traffic Authority show this trend has continued in 2009, despite fuel costs falling, suggesting that the economic downturn, environmental & health concerns may be making public transport a more attractive option. ...*

*"University of Technology planning expert Garry Glazebrook said the figures were a part of a long-term global trend that would require new transport planning, and reflected a range of factors including the cost of car travel in tough economic times and changing land use patterns. ... 'The days of building toll roads are at an end. We have to stop catering for more car traffic'. ...*

*"The executive director of the International Association of Public Transport, Peter Moore, said the Sydney figures hinted at what the city could become if it had a transport system with sufficient capacity. 'The evidence from around the world is overwhelming that if we could supply the necessary capacity in NSW, it would be fully utilised - it's a no-brainer', Mr Moore said. 'Clearly the demand is there in Sydney but at the moment people are being crowded out of trains and buses. The Government needs to stop widening roads and start implementing integrated transport planning policies now'."*

**Ref: Paul Bilby, SMH, 22/2/09**

**Comment:** With public transport high on the political agenda its amazing the scant resources that are provided, compared to the sums poured into road building and the car industry. I note that on Radio National this morning, Queensland Liberal National Party leader Lawrence Springborg listed public transport as his second most important issue on announcement of the election.

And on the subject of road spending vs public transport spending, it's becoming apparent that nobody seems to know the actual proportions.



**Responsible Mum drives the kids to school.**

## Rail Investment

The Federal government is spending "\$1.7 billion on the interstate rail freight system is to make rail more competitive by slashing travel times and improving reliability, helping to reduce the number of trucks on our roads with each 1,500 metre train equivalent to around 100 semi trailers. Together, rail projects currently underway and those announced in December by the Prime Minister aim to cut freight times along the Melbourne to Brisbane corridor from around 37 hours to around 26 hours - a 30 per cent improvement."

**Ref: Media Release 17/2/09**

## More on Myki

*"The Brumby Government wants to roll out its bungled \$1.3 billion Myki smartcard ticketing system in stages to avoid a 'big bang', Cabinet documents show. The Transport Ticketing Authority is planning to launch separate projects of the system next year -- such as 'Metro Go Live' and 'Victoria Go Live'. It also suggested a 'Geelong Go Live' launch as part of a progressive roll-out across the regional bus network. 'The purpose of this approach is to continue to progressively increase the ramp up of Go Live activities and to decrease the risk of a 'big bang' approach', one of the documents states. The documents, obtained under Freedom of Information, show the briefing was prepared in September 2007. Opposition transport spokesman Terry Mulder said yesterday taxpayers had a right to know how much the roll-out would cost."*

**Ref: Geraldine Mitchell, Herald Sun, 24/2/09**

## Sustainable Cities

*"The world's great cities are at a crucial tipping point in their development. London is finding it difficult to cope with the growth in demand for public transport, Beijing has serious air pollution and the infrastructure of US cities is collapsing. Australia's cities are rightly regarded as some of the finest urban environments in the world but they, too, are in trouble.*

*"The Sydney city region is typical. Its traffic levels are among the highest in the world, its air pollution routinely breaches World Health Organisation standards, and its planning and metropolitan governance are not fit for the purpose. Brisbane, Perth and Melbourne have fuelled traffic growth with an excess of highly expensive new highways and a failure to recognise global trends in so-called demand management. London has its congestion charge, Toronto will not build new roads and many other cities are heavily into high-quality public transport, walking and cycling strategies. Australia is being left behind.*

*"Transport planners and geographers have repeatedly identified the links between large new expensive bridge, tunnel and highway projects and traffic growth. These projects intensify automobile dependence, produce unhealthy citizens and make cities expensive to run. Sydney's poor-quality walking and cycling facilities deter its citizens from making use of cheap, healthy alternatives to the car. This adds to the obesity toll and related diseases such as early-onset diabetes. The heavy reliance on cars makes for a foul stew of poor air quality which adds to respiratory disease and hospital admissions, and actually spending time in cars adds to the negative health impact. Researchers in several countries have identified the high levels of air pollution (including those pollutants causing cancer) inside cars and still Australia's urban residents spend significant amounts of time in their cars and take the children to school by car.*

*"Canberra suffers from energy-greedy urban sprawl. The long distances to be travelled, the over-generous road space provision and the lack of high-density, mixed-use, attractive urban planning make Canberra a far less attractive place than its splendid physical environment would suggest. The expansion of Sydney to the west and Melbourne's abandonment of an effective urban boundary make things worse.*

*"The loss of agricultural land reduces the robustness of Australia's food supply system and*

*makes the nation extremely vulnerable to shocks that will flow from peak oil and climate change. Local food and agricultural produce not based on huge oil inputs are vital to resilience and survival, and are being squandered around Melbourne and Sydney.*

*"Peak oil is looming and Britain's Local Government Association has issued advice to all local authorities on how to deal with it. The smart money is currently on 2012 as the crunch year but the actual year matters less than the impact. Australia's cities will be approaching maximum oil dependence at exactly the time when global oil availability is falling fast and the oil demands of China and India are really taking off.*

*"This is a national security threat as well as a problem for cities and it needs a robust response. Australia's expanding suburbs makes things worse and are exactly the opposite of what we should be doing. Sweden has recognised the importance of reducing oil dependence in its 'Oil free by 2020' policy and it would be very smart indeed for every city and state in Australia to follow suit.*

*"There are five things that can be done to make Australian cities resilient in the face of peak oil and climate change. Each city needs:*

- ❖ *A clear metropolitan strategy that will reduce fossil fuel use and greenhouse gases. This would cover transport, renewable energy and energy use in buildings.*
- ❖ *A clear transport plan that focuses on active travel and the greatest possible increase in walking and cycling. A minimum of 500km of segregated cycle paths is needed in each city.*
- ❖ *A thorough re-engineering of urban space so that pedestrian pavements are widened and pedestrian journeys rewarded with waiting times at crossing points reduced by at least half.*
- ❖ *A comprehensive organisational re-engineering of rail, bus and ferry systems so that total integration of all kinds is hard-wired into the system.*
- ❖ *A large-scale local food project based on no more loss of agricultural land, the doubling of food production by 2012 and de-coupling food-growing from oil dependence.*

*"The choice between resilience and lack of resilience has to be made in 2009, and the choice is between a healthy, successful city and a failed city. The reality behind these choices is that a shift into a resilience strategy benefits everybody and provides long-term security and quality of life for all the citizens of urban Australia. There is absolutely nothing to lose and absolutely everything to gain."*

**Ref: John Whitelegg, Canberra Times, 4/2/09**

## More on Seniors

*“Perhaps the most consistent priority for senior Victorians across the consultations was in relation to the mobility and transport barriers they face in maintaining their independence and participation. Discussions pointed to three distinct challenges. Firstly the lack of level and connected footpaths, regular rest points and public toilets creates physical barriers to maintaining mobility within local communities as people get older. Victorian seniors suggested that local planning should take into account the mobility needs of an older population.*

*“Second is the increasing need for a range of transport options, not only in a number of areas where there are limited public services, especially after hours and on weekends, but also for more affordable door-to-door options, such as community buses, to complement the public transport network, which many frail older people cannot access. Possible strategies included expanding community transport initiatives and expanding access to the Government's Multi Purpose Taxi Program.*

*“(Victorian Patient Travel Assistance Scheme) claims are sometimes knocked back because patients are not able to get to Bendigo and go to Melbourne instead. (Written Submission)*

*“An important component of a more responsive transport system is the need for more flexible medical transport options to meet the needs of older patients. For example, medical transport policies could be made more client-centred, particularly around the availability of ambulance services for transporting patients between hospitals and more prompt payment of refunds under the Victorian Patient Travel Assistance Scheme for travel to the most accessible – not necessarily closest – health service. Increasing public transport services between Southern Cross Station and major public hospitals would greatly assist Victorian seniors coming to Melbourne for specialist appointments.*

*“Third is the challenge of accessing and safely using private and public modes of transport, particularly as there may not be adequate room or access for mobility aids and it can be difficult reach a seat or ensure a secure hold before buses and trams take-off. Practical suggestions to improve use included improving training for train, tram and bus drivers to promote seniors' safety, including the importance of smooth acceleration and deceleration; regular announcements to passengers to give up their seat for those with special needs; supporting*

*driving retraining for older drivers; and building seniors' awareness of and access to alternatives to the car, such as making more parking available for non-commuters around train stations.”*

**Ref: Seniors Speak Up! Report of Key Findings to Minister for Senior Victorians From the Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians, December 2008**

[http://www.seniors.vic.gov.au/Web19/osv/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/report+to+the+Minister/\\$file/Seniors+Speak+Up+Report+of+Key+Findings+to+Minister+for+Senior+Victorians.pdf](http://www.seniors.vic.gov.au/Web19/osv/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/report+to+the+Minister/$file/Seniors+Speak+Up+Report+of+Key+Findings+to+Minister+for+Senior+Victorians.pdf)

## Electric Ford



*“In 2010, Ford will be releasing the first battery electric-powered version of its Transit Connect, whose petrol version is already popular in the US. The small van will be ideal for lightweight transport for any commercial vehicle fleet. ‘A growing number of our commercial vehicle fleet clients have expressed interest in electrification as a sustainable mobility solution’, said Derrick Kuzak, Ford's group VP of Global Product Development.*

*“Transit Connect with battery electric power is the first offering in Ford's aggressive new electric vehicle plan to bring pure battery-powered vehicles, hybrids and plug-in hybrids to market. To start, during the next four years, Ford will introduce in North America:*

- The Transit Connect battery electric commercial vehicle in 2010
- A new battery electric small car in 2011
- Next-generation hybrid vehicles in 2012
- Plug-in hybrid versions in 2012

*“Ford believes that this particular vehicle is well suited to start a trend of electric commercial vehicles. Its combination of drivability and capacity has made it a popular commercial fleet vehicle in both Europe and North America. It has won awards in both regions. Ford has a number of Transit models available in Australia but is yet to bring the Transit Connect to our shores.”*

**Ref: Green Razor 70, Green Pages, 16/2/09**

## More on Parking

*"The average car-park takes up 30sqm while the average employee requires 15sqm. So Twice as much land is provided for parking as is allocated to for employees. ... Not only do minimum parking requirements suppress density in town centres, but they are a massive subsidy for vehicle users - spurring vehicle dependent residential development on the urban fringe. ... Ultimately parking reform will deliver congestion reduction benefits far in excess of any highway. Plus, benefits are locked in and amplified over time - A winner! Economically, socially, and environmentally."*

**Ref: 'sdonovan', Frogblog, 13/2/09**

*"I just happened to find this in a journal article that analysed the impact of employer provided parking subsidies in Los Angeles: 'Parking subsidies have such a strong influence on commuters' travel choices because the subsidies are so large. For those who park free in downtown Los Angeles, their average parking subsidy is equivalent to 11 cents per vehicle mile traveled to work. Thus, imposing a congestion toll of 11 cents per mile traveled would raise the cost of driving to the Los Angeles CBD by only as much as employer-paid parking already lowers it for 69,500 commuters'. Of course, that article was published in 1992, so we're looking at 1990-92 US \$. Been a bit of inflation since then..."*

**Ref: 'Julie', Frogblog, 13/2/09**

*"Sprawl is hugely inefficient, which is starting to show in the USA over the past few months. Over the next couple of years I think we'll see huge tracts of abandoned sprawl throughout the USA - that sounds like a pretty failed planning paradigm to me. What you say about public transport being screwed over by the proliferation of free parking couldn't be more true. I think minimum parking requirements should be banned for residential dwellings within a set distance of train stations and bus route, while in the CBD the Regional Council should tax off-street parking places like the NSW government does for downtown Sydney. That policy has the two-fold benefit of discouraging the provision of off-street parking in the CBD (and therefore reducing private car congestion and the need to spend billions on more motorways) while also giving the government a whole pile of money to spend on public transport improvements."*

**Ref: 'jarbury', Frogblog, 13/2/09**

Read the full blog at:

<http://blog.greens.org.nz/2009/02/12/obama-the-days-of-building-sprawl-forever-are-over/#comments>

## Automobile Apartheid (Part 2)

*"Though we know how to build streets that are safer for pedestrians through traffic calming techniques, most governments spend a paltry sum on this compared to road maintenance and expansion. Consider that a five-year study in Oakland, California found that children living within one block of a speed hump are 50 to 60 percent less likely to be injured by a car as compared to children whose streets lacked humps. Oakland installed 1,600 speed humps and child pedestrian deaths and injuries dropped 15 percent from 1995 to 2003. Reducing vehicle speeds is nearly always a low priority compared to moving traffic. Yet the probability of a pedestrian being killed when a vehicle is traveling at 15 mph is 3.5 percent, which jumps to 37 percent if the car speed increases to just 31 mph, and to 83 percent at 44 mph. For sure, if streets are to serve people, then car speeds must be reliably reduced."*

*"One Katrina lesson for American society is that it is time to acknowledge the sprawl culture and its automobile apartheid. Long before the recent spike in gasoline prices, millions of Americans have abandoned sprawl living in their search for less automobile dependency; they have sought homes near transit stations, closer to work, and in pedestrian-friendly communities. Now we need government to stop all the subsidies and biases for automobiles and fairly serve all citizens. More focus on public transit is needed. The Victoria Transport Policy Institute analyzed rail transit in the U.S. and found that the total national subsidy was offset by more than four times higher economic benefits -- \$12.5 billion versus over \$53 billion. In Portland, Oregon, 75 percent of light rail riders said they could drive but choose transit. In Salt Lake City, 45 percent of light rail riders were new to public transit; in Denver it was 39 percent."*

*"Americans are smarter than their elected representatives. A 2004 national survey by Associated Press found that 51 percent of respondents believed that the higher priority for government spending is expanding public transportation, versus 46 percent for building more roads. In the congested Atlanta region, a survey found that 61 percent think that the long-term solution for traffic congestion is expanding mass transit and creating communities that allow for shorter trips, compared to just 22 percent supporting new road building. Let those Americans who stick to heavy vehicle use deal with traffic congestion and high costs, and let others have an opportunity to slash their automobile addiction."*

**Ref: Joel Hirschhorn, American Chronicle, 26/10/05** See the full transcript at:

[www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/3216](http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/3216)