

Comparing Cities

"While cities across the world were to blame for about 71% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, urban dwellers who can use public transport rather than drive helped to lower per capita emissions in some cities. For instance, the sprawling western US city of Denver's per capita emissions were nearly double those in New York City, home to eight million inhabitants and a gritty, heavily used subway system. 'This is mainly attributable to New York's greater density and much lower reliance on the automobile for commuting', said [a report in the peer-reviewed journal Environment and Urbanisation]."

"Even Denver's per capita emissions, at 21.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, were sharply higher than Shanghai at 11.2 tCO₂e, Paris (5.2) and Athens (10.4). ... An analysis of three neighbourhoods in Toronto found that the highest emissions came from the suburbs, where streets are lined with large single family homes that are far from commercial centres. The lowest levels of emissions came from areas with apartment complexes in walking distance to shopping and transit."

Ref: Sky News, 26/1/11

"Brisbane ... has come in at 21st in the Liveability Survey of 140 world cities. ... Each city is rated across five categories: stability, health care, culture and environment, education and infrastructure. ... The Canadian west coast city of Vancouver ... scored 98% ... with Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, once again claiming the worst position with a rating of 37.5%, narrowly ranking lower than the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka."

Ref: Tony Moore & Daniel Hurst, Brisbane Times, 23/2/11

"Seems to me, a high correlation between liveability and good public transport ..."

"Ah yes transport infrastructure letting us [Brisbane] down again. But we've just built a whole lot of transport infrastructure! Clem7 [road tunnel], Go Between and Legacy Way to come... Now let's see. They must be referring to the farcical lack of public and active transport facilities and services – both of which Adelaide and Perth have increased spending on in recent years. Bike lanes, bus shelters, new routes and increased services and so on. What have our ratepayer dollars been spent on? Almost entirely on tunnel construction which will have the effect of increasing the overall congestion burden on Brisbane. Brilliant."

Ref: Reader's Comments, Brisbane Times, 23/2/11

Caltex on Carbon and Ethanol

"Caltex Australia says it wants private and light commercial vehicles excluded from any carbon pricing scheme, in addition to safeguards for trade exposed industries. Chief executive Julian Segal made the comments today while delivering a 49% jump in the oil refiner's full year net profit to \$302 million. He said a carbon tax of \$25 a tonne wouldn't be a major impost on passenger vehicles, as they typically 'emit about five tonnes a year'. ..."

"Mr Segal also said Caltex wasn't looking to enter the growing bio-fuels manufacturing sector in the near term, due to uncertainty about the technology in use and cost of production. Sales of ethanol from the group's distribution business more than doubled to 0.82 billion litres in 2010, from 0.38 billion litres in 2009. ... Mr Segal said government mandates for the inclusion of ethanol-blended petrol by primary wholesalers, like that in NSW, had boosted ethanol consumption in the state. 'What is fact, is that whilst we don't necessarily support mandating ... when the mandate was introduced it has given people the choice to use E10 (ethanol blend fuel) and a result of that there has been significant uptake of that fuel'."

Ref: AAP, The Australian, 21/2/11

The Top 10 Cities:

1. Vancouver, Canada
2. Melbourne, Australia
3. Vienna, Austria
4. Toronto, Canada
5. Calgary, Canada
6. Helsinki, Finland
7. Sydney, Australia
8. (=) Perth, Australia
8. (=) Adelaide, Australia
10. Auckland, New Zealand

The Bottom 10 Cities:

1. Harare, Zimbabwe
2. Dhaka, Bangladesh
3. Port Moresby, PNG
4. Lagos, Nigeria
5. Algiers, Algeria
6. Karachi, Pakistan
7. Douala, Cameroon
8. Tehran, Iran
9. Dakar, Senegal
10. Colombo, Sri Lanka

Ref: Economist Magazine

More on Doncaster Rail

"VicRoads have tried very hard to make a Doncaster rail line impossible but if it was built:

- *Four trains an hour would carry the load as usage developed The Clifton Hill loop tunnel does have six spare slots (because the City Circle route was dropped) but the South Morang Extension will take at least one of them and the re-signalling of the Greensborough to Hurstbridge track will take another.*
- *If Pakula's ridiculous busway from South Morang to Mernda is replaced by a proper railway, extending in due course to Whittlesea, every slot on the Clifton Hill section of the loop will be taken and then some.*

"It is time to look beyond band-aid solutions to Melbourne's public transport problems and recognise that if we don't want Melbourne to become a third rate copy of Los Angeles, serious money will have to be spent increasing the capacity of the central part of the system."

Ref: John Legge, 28/2/11

Solutions for US Congestion

"The recession has helped some of us forget about our national traffic problem, but the recovery should help us remember it. ... After two years of slight declines in overall traffic congestion – attributable to the economic downturn and high fuel prices – leading indicators suggest that as the economy rebounds, traffic problems are doing the same. While 2008 was the best year for commuters in at least a decade, the problem again began to grow in 2009.

"Congestion costs continue to rise: measured in constant 2009 dollars, the cost of congestion has risen from \$24 billion in 1982 to \$115 billion in 2009. The total amount of wasted fuel in 2009 topped 3.9 billion gallons – equal to 130 days of flow in the Alaska Pipeline. Cost to the average commuter: \$808 in 2009, compared to an inflation-adjusted \$351 in 1982. Yearly peak delay for the average commuter was 34 hours in 2009, up from 14 hours in 1982. ...

"The congestion reduction benefits of two significant solutions are discussed: public transportation and roadway operations. Without public transportation services, travellers would have suffered an additional 785 million hours of delay and consumed 640 million more gallons of fuel – a savings of \$19 billion in congestion costs. Roadway operational treatments save travellers 320 million hours of delay and 265 million gallons of fuel for a congestion cost savings of \$8 billion.

"Researchers recommend a balanced and diversified approach to reducing traffic congestion – one that focuses on more of everything. Their strategies include:

- *Get as much use as possible out of the transportation system we have.*
- *Add roadway and public transportation capacity in the places where it is needed most.*
- *Change our patterns, employing ideas like ridesharing and flexible work times to avoid traditional 'rush hours'.*
- *Provide more choices, such as alternate routes, telecommuting and toll lanes for faster and more reliable trips.*
- *Diversify land development patterns, to make walking, biking and mass transit more practical.*
- *Adopt realistic expectations, recognizing for instance that large urban areas are going to be congested, but they don't have to stay that way all day long."*

Ref: Press Release, Urban Mobility Information, 20/1/11

http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/media_information/press_release.stm

Grand Theft Auto

"Nationwide in the US in 2005, there were an estimated 1.2 million motor vehicle thefts [sometimes referred to as grand theft auto by the media and police departments in the US], or approximately 416.7 motor vehicles stolen for every 100,000 inhabitants. Property losses due to motor vehicle theft in 2005 were estimated at \$7.6 billion."

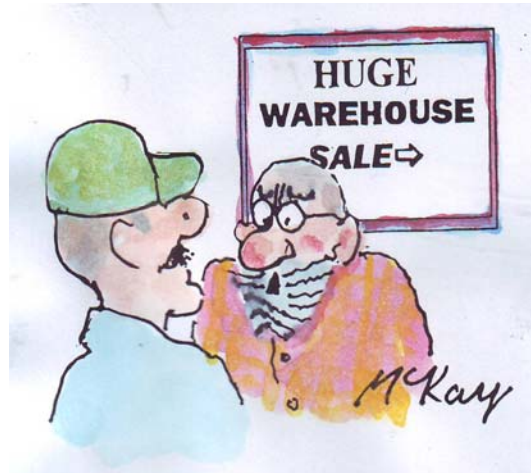
Ref: Wikipedia, 19/1/11

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motor_vehicle_theft

The Unwanted Mansion

"Former [WA] state planning minister Alannah MacTiernan told the Australian Property Institute forum that the four-bedroom, two-bathroom McMansion risked becoming unsaleable, thanks to demographic changes. 'You talk to young couples in outer suburbs, not on a big income, and you ask why they want a four-by-two when it's only the two of them', she said. 'They say they have been told it is about resale value and that you can't sell a three-by-one. The market in the future is going to consist of smaller and smaller households and we may find that the four-by-two... turns out to be a lemon'. ... While the WA appetite was for larger home sizes, they should be designed in such a way that they could easily be split into two or three in line with a return to 'intergenerational living'. A property developer told the forum there were signs house prices had plateaued in recent years. Cedar Woods managing director Paul Sadlier said the market had to be shown that smaller could be better. 'We need to make 'mini-mansions' more fashionable and we need to make the case for infill development and showcase the better examples that are around'."

Ref: Chalpat Sonti, WA Today, 2/2/11



"They're selling huge warehouses"

The Unwanted Shopping Mall

"For half a century, strip malls were the commercial heart of suburbia. Americans drove to these open-air shopping centres, strung out along a main road, to pick up their dry-cleaning or get their hair styled. Now vacancy rates are at 10.9%, a level not seen since 1991, according to Reis, a property analyst. ... Ryan Severino, an economist with Reis, calls what happened 'over-development meets under-demolishment'. ... But suburban staples like Wal-Mart, Costco and Target are moving into cities, leaving hundreds of big stores empty, according to Edward McMahon of the Urban Land Institute. What of the future? Mr McMahon recently observed two Barnes & Noble outlets close to each other in Maryland. The one in a strip mall did less well than the one with no dedicated parking, but near a cycle path and the train. It is surrounded by other shops and restaurants in a sort of town centre, or, as Brandon Palanker of Renaissance Downtowns, a developer, describes it, 'a boutique city'. That may be the way ahead."

Ref: The Economist, 17/2/11

Do Roads Pay for Themselves? (Part 2)

"The Great Myth begins, as so many myths do, with an arduous journey – in this case, then-Lieutenant Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower's 62-day cross-country trip with a military convoy along our nation's rutted roads during the summer of 1919. Conditions like those faced by Eisenhower were all too familiar to the small but growing number of drivers, who clamoured for public investment in better roads. But how to pay for them? In the same year that Eisenhower made his journey, the state of Oregon hit upon an innovative method for raising money for the expensive task of improving the state's roads – a tax on gasoline, the revenues of which were exclusively dedicated to highway improvements."

"As the years went on and the automobile became increasingly popular, more states followed Oregon's lead. And in 1956, under the leadership of President Eisenhower, the federal government directed the revenues from the federal gasoline tax to raise money for the largest public works project in human history: the Interstate Highway System. In these good old times, the Interstate Highway System brought extraordinary prosperity, mobility and freedom to the land. Moreover, according to the Great Myth, it was paid for by those who used it – without meaningful subsidies from general taxpayers. The highways paid for themselves! And those who chose not to drive were supposedly none the worse off. According to the Great Myth, drivers not only endured but actually embraced the gas tax since they knew they were paying for better roads. ..."

"But like all myths, the Great Myth of Highway Finance relies as much on fiction as fact. ... That's because even during the so-called good old days gasoline taxes weren't always used exclusively for roads, they have almost always failed to fully pay the cost of highways, and non-drivers have always borne additional costs from highways in the form of disrupted neighbourhoods, accidents, and a polluted environment. Correcting these myths might seem to be merely an historical exercise and in an ideal world, it would be. But the Great Myth carries with it a set of false presumptions [that] distort transportation decision-making."

"In a sensible world, America would invest in transportation projects that deliver the greatest benefits to the population, and pay for those investments in ways that allocate the costs fairly across society – taking into account the many ways that transportation investments can benefit or harm individuals and businesses. In the world of the Great Myth, however, each transportation mode is presumed to survive only on the money its users can provide – and all of the money its users provide should go to that transportation mode, regardless of where the greatest benefits can be achieved."

Ref: Introduction, Do Roads Pay for Themselves, US PIRG, 4/1/11 See report at:
http://cdn.publicinterestnetwork.org/assets/28b773b9f18cdb23da3e48a8d7884854/Do-Roads-Pay-for-Themselves_-wUS.pdf

"In virtually any vision of the nation's transportation future, highways will continue to play a critical role in getting Americans where they need to go. With many of the nation's highways and bridges aging – and in the wake of years of deferred maintenance – there will be no shortage of worthwhile highway projects for the nation to invest in, even if the goal is simply to maintain the infrastructure we already have. What is the harm, then, in simply dedicating revenue from gasoline taxes to highways? The harm is that dedication of gasoline tax revenue to highway projects inherently prejudices transportation decision-making in favour of highways. In the current atmosphere of massive state budget shortfalls and federal budget deficits, there is simply no way to ensure that other transportation priorities receive adequate investment if highways get first dibs on dedicated funding. If the choice facing local decision-makers, for example, is to build or expand a highway with federal funding or do nothing at all, those decision-makers are likely to build the highway, even if other, harder-to-fund transportation solutions would provide greater overall benefits."

"If gasoline tax revenues are to be dedicated to transportation, all transportation modes must have the ability to compete for that funding on a level playing field with consideration of long-term benefits. Just as there are ample opportunities for meaningful investment in highway repair, so too are there many opportunities for worthwhile investments in transit, high-speed rail, and active transportation projects such as bike lanes and pedestrian facilities, as well as investment in technologies and practices – such as sound barriers and traffic calming – that ensure that our transportation infrastructure melds itself effectively into our communities."

Ref: Do Roads Pay for Themselves, US PIRG, 4/1/11 See report at:
http://cdn.publicinterestnetwork.org/assets/28b773b9f18cdb23da3e48a8d7884854/Do-Roads-Pay-for-Themselves_-wUS.pdf

Australian Road Safety

"Tony Eastley: The National Road Safety Council has ... criticised elements of the automotive industry for encouraging speeding and dangerous driving. Here's Emily Bourke.

"Emily Bourke: Road trauma is a \$27 billion problem annually and one that the National Road Safety Council says requires a radical new action plan. The council's Roger Cook says Australia's target to reduce road casualties should be just as ambitious as Europe's.

"Roger Cook: And theirs is a 50% reduction on a figure that's already lower than ours. Their fatality rate is less than Australia's per 100,000 people. So we're saying there is absolutely no reason why Australia shouldn't also be adopting a 50% target which we feel can be achieved if all of the strategies are adopted. ...

"Emily Bourke: Roger Cook says it's time to consider road safety in the same way as workplace safety.

"Roger Cook: If there is a work fatality or a serious injury then someone at the end of the day is accountable for that and it's treated as a very, very serious matter whereas with a road accident people

tend to be accepting the fact that yes, there will be 1500-odd people killed a year and 30,000 seriously injured. ...

“Emily Bourke: And he argues the car industry itself also needs some modification.

“Roger Cook: You really have to question why speedos, speedometers in cars go up to 250 or thereabouts when the speed limit in the country, the maximum speed limit in the country is 110. So there is feeling from some of the research that's being done that having that higher figure on the speedo tempts some people to actually utilise speeds well in excess of the legal limits.

“Emily Bourke: And that also includes tougher design regulations for light commercial vehicles.

“Roger Cook: Particularly some of the big four wheel drive utilities which you think would be pretty safe are not coming through the safety ratings all that well. And then the delivery vans, some of the delivery vans and so on of which you know there are so many on the road also don't meet very stringent requirements so, and the people who are driving them are entitled to that degree of protection.

“Emily Bourke: And Roger Cook says bans should apply to some imported cars that aren't up to Australia's safety standards.

“Roger Cook: “There are some vehicles starting to come into the country that really have very poor safety ratings and that's going to set us back in terms of the achievements we've made over the last 10 years or so. So we think until those cars can achieve the safety ratings that are necessary and that have now been achieved by other manufacturers, then they shouldn't be allowed into the country.”

Ref: AM, ABC Radio, 11/2/11

www.abc.net.au/am/content/2011/s3135972.htm

And Also ...

“Almost 150 Melburnians cycled through the city wearing only their helmets yesterday, stripping for what organisers called an ‘all-purpose naked protest’ that ‘exposed the vulnerability of cyclists on our roads’.”

Ref: The Age, 7/3/11

Shinkansen

“Japan's ultra-fast, frequent and punctual bullet trains have made them the preferred choice for many travellers, rather than flying or road travel, ever since the first Shinkansen was launched in time for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. But as Japan, and its railway companies, struggle with a fast-greying and shrinking population and falling domestic demand, the government and industry are aggressively seeking to promote the bullet trains abroad. Japan has in the past sold Shinkansen technology to Taiwan and hopes to capture other overseas markets, such as Brazil and Vietnam, but faces stiff competition from train manufacturers in China, France and Germany.

“The biggest prize is a future high-speed US rail network that President Barack Obama has promoted, to be backed by \$US13 billion in public funding. ... Japan says its trains boast a strong safety record: despite running in an earthquake-prone country, no passenger has ever died due to a Shinkansen derailment or collision – although people have committed suicide by jumping in front of the trains. Japan has also been developing a magnetic levitation

or maglev train that, its operator says, reached a world record speed of 581 kilometres per hour in 2003 on a test track near Mount Fuji in Tsuru, west of Tokyo. The plan is to launch maglev services between Tokyo and the central city of Nagoya by 2027. By 2045 they are expected to link Tokyo with the main western city of Osaka in just one hour and seven minutes, compared with the current two hours 25.”

Ref: AFP, The Age, 7/3/11



Japan's New Bullet Train, the 'Hayabusa'

Photo: AFP, The Age, 7/3/11

Flywheel-Hybrid Success in the UK

"London Midland's innovative Stourbridge branch line service has recorded 99.5 % reliability in 2010 while providing nearly seventy thousand services for passengers. In the first full calendar year of operation for its lightweight, low-energy Class 139 railcars, the proportion of timetabled services operated on schedule and on time was 99.5%. This high level of performance was maintained even in the challenging winter conditions at the beginning and end of the year, when many rail services elsewhere in Britain were affected by problems associated with leaf fall, snow and freezing temperatures. Over 68,000 timetabled trips along the line were made by the two railcars in 2010. The number of passenger journeys made on the branch during the year was 465,000. Passenger numbers rose by around 20% compared to 2009, indicating the popularity of the service with the travelling public."

"The operation is not only a technical innovation, but an operating one as well. The flywheel-hybrid Parry People Movers railcars are operated and maintained under subcontract by Pre Metro Operations Ltd ... This is a solid demonstration of how lightweight rail – which cuts carbon and costs – can help make big improvements to local transport. ... Neil Bamford, engineering director of London Midland, said: 'The Parry People Movers railcars are our smallest trains, but they're gaining a good reputation for reliable service'."

Ref: London Midland News Release, 7/1/10

"The Stourbridge Town branch, part of the London Midland network, runs between Stourbridge Junction and Stourbridge Town stations and at just over three-quarters of a mile long is the shortest rail route in Britain. The operation of the Stourbridge Town branch is subcontracted by London Midland to Pre Metro Operations Ltd, which uses its own operating crews and the Parry People Movers railcars to run the service. The new operating arrangements have enabled an increase in service frequency compared to the previous heavy rail service – now, the basic service gives a train in each direction every ten minutes (excluding early mornings, late evenings and Sundays). Calculations by Parry People Movers Ltd show that the Class 153 diesel trains previously used on the Stourbridge Town branch emitted an estimated 810kg of carbon dioxide a day, while the new lightweight Class 139 vehicles from Parry People Movers Ltd have brought this down to 240kg per day."

Ref: London Midland News Release, 7/1/10

Ferry Expansion Plan for New York

"Across the city [of New York], more than 60 miles of largely-abandoned waterfront land is being reclaimed for recreation and new communities. But some of these neighbourhoods lack the basic transportation infrastructure required for sustain-able growth. In some areas, the nearest subway stop is more than three-quarters of a mile away. Where there is service, the trains and buses are increasingly crowded as growing numbers of commuters use stations closest to Manhattan."

"Ferries and water taxis can help solve both of these problems. In addition, ferries have proven that they can provide critical backup transportation for the city during emergencies, as they did on 9/11 and during the 2003 blackout. That's why we will seek to expand ferry service to emerging neighbourhoods across the city and seamlessly integrate it into the city's transportation network. Ferry service is most effective when it connects riders with land-based transit bringing them close to their inland destinations. That is why we will work with the MTA to extend bus routes to ferry docks from Midtown. We will also explore the possibility of using BRT or other fast service on cross-town routes for more efficient connections, especially across 34th Street and 42nd Street. Finally, for ferries to be considered an effective component of the city's mass transit system, they must be treated that way. That is why ferry passengers must be able to use their MetroCards for ferries and the connecting bus service."

Ref: New York City website, January 2011

www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/plan/transportation_expand-ferry.shtml

Trouble in Paradise

"Twenty years ago Todi, perched on a hill in the Tiber Valley in Italy, was celebrated as the world's most liveable town, a modern paradise. That was the conclusion reached after a lengthy study by a team from the University of Kentucky. The news was broadcast worldwide, which not only drew tourists to Todi but also new residents from many countries including the US, Britain, Ireland, Germany and Australia. ... The Umbrian town with one of the country's finest piazzas looks out on a rolling landscape"

familiar from Italian Renaissance paintings, with handsome 13th- to 15th-century palaces and churches and concentric Etruscan, ancient Roman and mediaeval city walls. ... But some Todians complain that the central piazza has become a parking lot and that the foreigners have pushed housing and other prices out of reach. Many shops in central Todi have closed because they cannot compete with supermarkets beyond the city walls."

Ref: Desmond O'Grady, The Age, 15/1/11

Australian Government Considers Banning Bullbars

"Bullbars could be banned under changes to the [Australian] national road safety rules currently being considered by the Federal Government. The Government has invited public comment on proposed changes to the design rules for cars.

Aimed at improving safety for pedestrians, the changes include the mandatory redesign of cars from 2012-13 and could see bullbars being outlawed. The executive director of the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association says there have been similar changes to road rules in Europe. Stuart Charity says the changes will effectively eliminate bullbars on the grounds they are a danger to pedestrians. 'The bullbar industry in Australia is a \$300 million industry and it's at significant jeopardy with these regulations being proposed', he said. But Mr Charity is concerned the regulations do not address the issue of passenger safety. 'Our real concern is that the regulations only address the pedestrian impact safety element, and not the vehicle occupant impact', he said.



Photo: ABC News

'Bullbars in the Australian context play a critical role in keeping the occupants of vehicles safe, stopping vehicles being stranded and so on. The incidence of animal strikes in Australia is huge. Our initial data shows that there are around 25 to 30,000 insurance claims as a result of animal strikes a year.'

Ref: Gail Liston and Lucy McNally, ABC News, 25/1/11

"Bullbars preserve the vehicle, at the expense of the occupants. Modern vehicles are designed to gradually decelerate the occupants, by crumpling. After a crash, whether it be a cow or a brick wall, the car looks a mess, but the people are in relatively good shape. That is by design. The car is sacrificed to preserve the people. Bullbars preserve the car, at the expense of people. Which do you love most: your car, or the people around you?"

"Pedestrians should look where they're going, or have someone to do it for them."

"How about trying to avoid hitting roos – or any wildlife, rather than using your car with its bullbar as a weapon to kill any wildlife on the roads. I've seen many yobbos on country roads actively aiming to hit wildlife. Get rid of the bullbars, and stop these idiots adding to the carnage of wildlife, and better yet, help protect the safety of pedestrians."

"I think its a stupid idea and does not take into account the purpose of bull bars on 4x4's etc, perhaps they should look at educating pedestrians not to look straight at you and walk out in front of your moving vehicle thinking that you will stop, its ridiculous the amount of pedestrians that don't use crossings provided and play chicken in this way."

"Why not keep pedestrians off the road and on the footpath where they belong. Separate the pedestrian from the hazard – no problem."

"Yeah brilliant! And how do we get to our cars to drive them?"

"At a minimum, drivers with bull bars should have to drive at 20 km/hr less than the posted speed limit and they should be subject to double demerits and double fines for any speeding offenses – if they want to drive lethal machinery they should be made to take on the responsibility!"

"At Camberwell market some years ago, a bull barred vehicle reversed into me and the sleeve of my jacket was caught on one of its sticking out bits. The driver then started driving forward dragging me along with his vehicle. In spite of me screaming out at the top of my voice and surrounding people shouting and banging on the side of the vehicle I was dragged about ten metres along the road. Bull bars are not a necessity in cities."

"Wallabies/roos don't have insurance policies and cant be claimed against so I've been penalised with huge excesses on my private car insurance (with roo bar) for any kind of claim, because of wallaby/roo damage claims on the company car (no roo bar), because it looks like I'm a bad driver."

"Just legislate to have them [SUVs/4WDs] painted a high visibility 'day-glo' orange. That would ensure their removal from the merchant bankers' Toorak Tractors."

Ref: Readers' Comments, ABC News, 25/1/11

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/25/3120821.htm