

Federal Liberal Plan for Cities

"Setting out an ambitious ... plan yesterday for the development of Melbourne to 2030, [Federal Shadow Environment Minister Greg] Hunt said the city should bury overhead transmission wires, put overpasses and underpasses around every level rail crossing, divert industrial traffic away from the city through an 'orbital network' of roads and distribution centres, and progressively transfer port-related activity from Melbourne to Portland, Corio and Hastings. He said each of the capital cities needed a bipartisan integrated planning commission, made up of the three tiers of government and drawing on planning, social and business sectors to develop 30-year plans for open spaces, city boundaries, rail and road arteries, future water supplies, potential economic hubs and future port and transport terminals. To free the commission from controversy, its recommendations to state and local authorities should not be binding, but cities would be held to account by federal performance targets under a national liveability index.

"Mr Hunt said Australian cities were some of the most liveable in the world and were not broken, 'but they are damaged. There is real damage to social cohesion in some sections of our cities where community has broken down ... There is also erosion of quality of life where the corridors designed to limit congestion have become clogged'. ... Mr Hunt said the state could make \$1 billion by selling off land reserved for overhead transmission cables, which were an unpopular 'dead space' through the middle suburbs. Underground cabling could be done for less than \$50 million. Reclaimed land could be used for housing and public use. More controversially, he said medium-density commercial and residential properties could be built in the waste space' over rail lines and train stations, which he said would have to be in keeping with 'local character'."

Ref: Stuart Rintoul, The Australian, 7/3/11

Oil and War

"The problem for Libya's revolutionaries trying to get dithering powers to impose a no-fly zone is that not enough civilians have been killed yet – especially photogenic children, or a good mass slaughter by the mad colonel's military might. ... The problem for the collective West is that it can't be sure yet that the revolutionaries will win. Gaddafi still has the organisation and weaponry to be lethal and you wouldn't want to be an oil importer backing the wrong horse. Or not backing the right despot. And what uncomfortable message might intervention send to the despots the West dare not annoy, the Saudi royal family? And all the blood and sacrifice, on one side or the other, will mean little for the oil price. America's growth rate, not Libyan politics, is the big oil mover. Libya remains noise to excite day traders and hedge funds – and a challenge for people of conscience, but they don't move markets."

Ref: Michael Pascoe, The Age, 8/3/11



Gaddafi's Tea Party (with his war cabinet)

More on Wikileaks on Oil Supply

"According to al-Husseini, the crux of the issue is twofold. First, it is possible that Saudi reserves are not as bountiful as sometimes described and the timeline for their production not as unrestrained as Aramco executives and energy optimists would like to portray. ... Al-Husseini disagrees with [the] analysis [that in 20 years, Aramco will have over 900 billion barrels of total reserves, and future technology will allow for 70% recovery], as he believes that Aramco's reserves are overstated by as much as 300 billion bbls of 'speculative resources'. He instead focuses on original proven reserves, oil that has already been produced or which is available for exploitation based on current technology. All parties estimate this amount to be approximately 360 billion bbls. In al-Husseini's view, once 50% depletion of original proven reserves has been reached and the 180 billion bbls threshold crossed, a slow but steady output decline will ensue and no amount of effort will be able to stop it. By al-Husseini's calculations, approximately 116 billion barrels of oil have been produced by Saudi Arabia, meaning only 64 billion barrels remain before reaching this crucial point of inflection. At 12 million b/d production, this inflection

point will arrive in 14 years. Thus, while Aramco will likely be able to surpass 12 million b/d in the next decade, soon after reaching that threshold the company will have to expend maximum effort to simply fend off impending output declines. Al-Husseini believes that what will result is a plateau in total output that will last approximately 15 years, followed by decreasing output. ... While he fundamentally contradicts the Aramco company line, al-Husseini is no doomsday theorist. His pedigree, experience and outlook demand that his predictions be thoughtfully considered."

Ref: Extract from the Confidential US Cable, 10/12/07 See the full document at:
www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/feb/08/oil-saudi-arabia?intcmp=239

And Also ...

"How did the Labor Government spend its final day in charge of NSW before going into caretaker mode ahead of the March 26 election? A broad-ranging series of decrees to secure the state's future, maybe? Or perhaps a bold plan of changes this city needs in transport, infrastructure and planning to put the acid on Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell? Nope, Team Kristina Keneally spent the final day of government business pushing through a series of minor policies and funding announcements [including] reducing train ticket prices on the airport line, which just happens to run through [Premier] Keneally's electorate."

Ref: Kate Sikora, The Daily Telegraph, 4/3/11

More on the UK M4 Bus Lane

"The former British deputy prime minister was ... was greeted by [Top Gear] host Jeremy Clarkson, who instantly grilled him about changes he made to British roads. 'What in the name of all that's holy were you thinking when you said "let's put a bus lane on the M4"?' he said. Prescott said: 'I'm going to introduce you to a revolutionary thought – you can go slower and get there quicker. And that's to do with flow. As soon as you made it two lanes and brought in the 70 [miles per hour] and 50 [miles per hour], you got there quicker'. ...

"The crowd drowned Prescott out with booing when he said: 'From 1997 when we came in ... you all and the public bought seven million more cars. Now if you look at the congestion ... So what is happening is the growth of the cars on the motorway ... that is the reality, you don't want to face the facts do you?' Prescott, who was deputy prime minister from 1997 to 2007, is notorious for promising to cut the number of car journeys when he was appointed, only for traffic and congestion to get worse."

Ref: Stephanie Gardiner, SMH 2/3/11



**Jeremy Clarkson clashes with John Prescott
on Top Gear**

Photo: Screengrab from BBC

Tianjin Eco-City

"They are erecting an entire city from scratch. China's central government wants it to be green beyond any existing metropolis, where the city's 350,000 residents will be able to make 90% of their trips via foot, pedal-power, or public transportation. ... But today it looks more like a Potemkin village than an urban utopia. ... With the country's urban areas growing at an explosive pace, coupled with Beijing's desire to lower its greenhouse gas emissions, China must build better cities. ...

"People are scheduled to move into Tianjin Eco-City in the middle of this year, although the construction site's inhospitable emptiness makes this suspect. ... [And] unless employment opportunities spring up immediately, residents will have to commute outside the city for work. ...

"Indeed, the view from Tianjin Eco-City, which is about 150 kilometres away from Beijing, demonstrates the difficulties China faces with its green projects and greenhouse gas emissions. Just across the road from the city-to-be, another construction project is underway, again with handfuls of cranes, but without

the green credentials of its neighbouring development. Any progress made by Tianjin Eco-City, where Chinese premier Wen Jiabao broke ground in September 2008, will easily be negated by less ambitious neighbours. ... 'Is Tianjin Eco-City a demonstration project of big ideas? Is it to kick the tyres to make sure we like it? Is it to prove different technologies work? Or is it designed to be for reputation only – a case of greenwash? [asks Stephen Hammer, recent executive director of the Energy Smart City Initiative.]'

Ref: Carrie Tait, Financial Post, 23/1/11

www.canada.com/business/fp/China+green+dream/4145713/story.html

And Also ...

"Last year in Beijing a record 800,000 new cars hit the roads sending this city into an ever-worse state of semi-perpetual traffic jam. The Beijing government has responded by slashing annual registrations by an enormous three-quarters. Now if you want to buy a new car you first need to win a number plate in an official lottery. There's a joke here that you're safer in Baghdad than Beijing because in Iraq at least an ambulance can reach you."

Ref: Stephen McDonnell, Correspondents Report, ABC Radio National, 26/2/11

www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2011/s3149731.htm

Problems with the Tar Sands Pipeline

"Growing opposition to a Canadian project to pump crude from tar sands in Alberta across six American states to the Gulf Coast could force the Obama administration to reconsider, and possibly delay, the project. The grassroots rebellion will go to Washington ... just as the State Department is due to decide whether to grant final approval to the 2735-kilometre Keystone XL pipeline. Construction is due to start at the end of the year. A delay could also be forced by activists along the proposed pipe route through Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. About 750 landowners have refused to allow the company, TransCanada Corp, on their land, setting the stage for court fights over compulsory purchase. National environmental organisations say the pipeline project jeopardises Mr Obama's commitment to a clean energy future. Activists also worry about the risk of pumping gritty, thick crude at high temperature and pressure through a pipeline with walls about a centimetre thick across vital sources of groundwater. ... TransCanada says it has reached deals for nearly 90% of the route. ... 'You know not everybody will agree with you', a spokesman said. He said the pipeline would be the safest ever built."

Ref: Suzanne Goldenberg, The Guardian, The Age, 4/3/11

Oil Supply and Petrol Prices

"Higher petrol prices are something we need to get used to, according to AMP Capital Investors chief economist Shane Oliver. He says that even if the oil price falls back when the Libya situation eventually resolves ... it won't fall back far. Dr Oliver predicts global demand for oil will increase substantially over the coming year as the US economy recovers to add to continued China-driven growth in Asian oil consumption. This will keep a floor under the oil price not far from where it is now, according to his estimates. 'In many ways, we have just got there sooner rather than later' he says. 'We are going to have to get used to petrol at \$1.40 to \$1.50 a litre'. ... The US is particularly important in the global oil market because its consumption is enormous – they still use oil for heating and for fuelling relatively large motor vehicles. The US consumes 25 barrels of oil per year per person, against 15 barrels a year per person in Australia and three barrels a year per person in China, according to Dr Oliver. So the economic recovery in the US has a huge impact on the global supply and demand balance for oil. In time, China's per capita consumption will also rise, putting further pressure on the global oil market."

Ref: Richard Webb, The Age, 27/2/11

Problems in the Oil-Rich Niger Delta

"Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth ... said they had filed an official complaint against Anglo-Dutch firm Shell for shirking responsibility for oil spills in Nigeria and wreaking havoc on the environment. A joint statement said Shell's operations in the southern oil-rich Niger Delta breached the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s guidelines for responsible business. 'The organisations claim that Shell's use of discredited and misleading information to blame the majority of oil pollution on saboteurs in its Niger Delta operations has breached the OECD guidelines for multi-national enterprises', it said. They filed the complaint with the British and Dutch

government contact points for the OECD. ... Shell's operations in Nigeria spanning more than 50 years have 'left an appalling legacy of environmental harm' ... 'Water that people use for fishing and drinking is polluted with oil, while farm land and crops have been destroyed'. ... Nigeria, the eight largest oil exporter, recorded at least 3,000 oil spills between 2006 and June last year, Environment Minister John Odey has said."

Ref: AFP, The Age, 25/1/11

Finnish Congestion Charge

"The Finnish transport minister, Anu Vehviläinen has rejected plans to introduce a congestion charge scheme in and around the country's capital city, Helsinki. Responding to a question in the Finnish parliament by the Green Party, Vehviläinen said studies carried out to date showed that a congestion charge scheme was not feasible. She added that the scheme would require extremely large-scale investment into public transport, with no such investments on the horizon. She also stated Helsinki's railway system was already operating at capacity. ... Her comments followed the delivery of a report from a government working group last week, which said that a congestion charge scheme in and around Helsinki would improve traffic flow and safety. The group also concluded that a congestion charge scheme would boost the competitiveness of public transport, raise public transport passenger numbers and reduce transport emissions."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 7/2/11



Australian Fast Rail Terms of Reference

"A strategic study will be undertaken on the implementation of a high speed rail network on the east coast of Australia. The study will focus on identifying possible routes, corridor preservation and station options, including city-centre, city-periphery and airport stations. This will provide a basis for route development, indicative transit times and high-level construction costs. As part of the core network element at the centre of the east coast corridor, the Newcastle–Sydney 'spine' will be a central aspect of this work. Options for links northwards to Brisbane and southwards to Canberra and Melbourne will also be considered.

"Specifically the study will:

- Identify undeveloped land corridors and/or existing corridors that could be considered for a high speed railway, and preservation strategies;
- Identify the main design decisions and requirements to build and operate a viable high speed rail network on the east coast of Australia;
- Present route and station options, including indicative construction costs and interaction with other transport modes;
- Provide costs estimates of undertaking the next stages of work, such as detailed route alignment identification and corridor resumptions;
- Identify potential financing and business operating models for the construction and operation of a high speed railway;
- Provide advice and options on relevant construction, engineering, financial and environmental considerations.

"The study will be managed by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport. It will draw on expertise from the public and private sectors, as well as international experience, growth forecasts and other contemporary data. Stakeholders will be consulted and contribute views through a formal reference group, which will include representatives from relevant Commonwealth, state and territory agencies and other key stakeholder groups. The high speed rail implementation study will by July 2011:

- Identify the requirements for implementation of a viable HSR network on the east coast;
- Identify strategic route and station options, including high-level costing.

"This initial phase will provide a basis for consultation and inform the specific direction of a second phase, including consideration of the specific corridors, routes and associated issues to be targeted for more detailed examination."

"Further work from July 2011 will include:

- Detailed corridor alignment identification;
- Identification of preliminary geotechnical issues;
- Development of comprehensive robust cost estimates for preferred options;
- Further investigation of investment and (public and private) financing options;
- Detailed patronage and revenue forecasts;
- Consideration of preferred options in relation to other modes (eg, airport capacity implications resulting from diversion of air traffic to train).

"This final work and report will take approximately 12 months to complete and inform the Australian Government[s] consideration of next steps for high speed rail in Australia."

Ref: Federal Media Statement, 1/2/11

What about Me? – South Australia

"South Australia should sit up, take notice and claim a seat at the table of the federal inquiry into high-speed rail. The initial inquiry ... risks freezing SA out of the picture for a major piece of nation-building infrastructure. SA has long battled to keep pace with the more populous eastern States and a high-speed rail network that ... leaves Adelaide out of the loop would seriously disadvantage us. The high-speed rail project is a long way off but just as it took many decades to go from wishful thinking to reality for the Alice Springs to Darwin rail track, a high-speed rail network linking the capitals will eventually be built."

"In the decades ahead, petroleum prices will soar, making car and air travel considerably more expensive. Coupled with greenhouse gas concerns, this will accelerate demand for rail as an alternative. In pushing our case, SA should enlist an unlikely ally Melbourne. It should be pointed out to Melbourne that with a network extending to Adelaide, Melbourne would be a node equal to Sydney, rather than the last stop at the end of the line. Victoria could also be sold the benefits of Horsham becoming the only stop on a Melbourne-Adelaide route. This would open up the western Victorian region that would otherwise risk becoming isolated. SA has a proud history in the rail sector, being home to some of the most important and innovative rail organisations, such as the Australian Rail Track Corporation. Obviously, it would cost many billions of dollars extra to include the link to Adelaide and it would not be an easy case to mount on strict profit criteria. But if we do not get in there and stake a claim, future generations will condemn us as we get left behind when the economic benefits of the project begin to flow."

Ref: Christopher Russell, Adelaide Now, 2/2/11

The Train in Spain

"Spain hurtled past France as Europe's high speed rail leader last month when it opened a 6.6-billion-euro line from Madrid to Valencia, banking on a boost to the economy. The 438-kilometre route, which opened on December 19, [2010] slashes travel time between the Spanish capital and the Mediterranean port of Valencia, Spain's third-biggest city, from four hours to just 90 minutes. The project, built at a cost of 6.6 billion euros (\$A8.6 billion), brings Spain's high-speed rail network to 2056 kilometres. It places Spain ahead of the 1896 kilometres of high speed rail in France and 1285 kilometres in Germany, home to Siemens, the world's largest manufacturer of high-speed trains."

"Spain's high-speed train service, known as Alta Velocidad Espanola (AVE), boasts trains with noses shaped like a duck-billed platypus moving at speeds of up to 300 kph. And it is set to grow further. Taking into account routes planned or under construction, Spain would be in second place globally with 5525 kilometres of high speed rail tracks, behind China the world leader with 13,134 kilometres but ahead of pioneer Japan with 3625 kilometres. By 2020 Spain wants to have 90% of the population within 50 kilometres of a high-speed rail station. 'The AVE is very expensive. But it is



An AVE Train in Spain
Photo: The Age

an investment that generates many jobs and contributes to stimulate the economy, which is good at a time of crisis', said the director general for travellers at state-owned rail network Renfe. ...

"The new Madrid-Valencia line will create 136,000 jobs directly and indirectly, according to consulting firm Accenture. But with a population of 47 million people, Spain has fewer potential passengers than France or Germany for its high-speed trains. Spain's bet on high-speed rail is 'the other face of the property bubble' which fuelled economic growth in Spain for over a decade before it burst, said Ramon Lopez de Lucio, a professor at the Architecture School of Madrid. 'That a country like Spain has more kilometres of AVE than any other nation aside from China makes no sense', he said, arguing that the Spanish government was over investing in infrastructure. Spain invested an amount equal to 1.79% of its gross domestic product in infrastructure in 2009, three times the amount invested by Germany, Europe's largest economy. ... The money would have been better employed in making improvements to the suburban train service or the rail freight network or in education and research, he said.

"Spain's first high-speed line was opened in 1992 between Madrid and Seville, timed to coincide with the Expo 92 world fair being held in the south-western city. Services followed in 2007 linking Madrid to the northern city of Valladolid and the southern city of Malaga, followed by a line to north-eastern Barcelona in 2008. 'The cumulative investment in AVE in 2010 approaches 45 billion euros', said economist Germa Bel of the University of Barcelona. When this impressive amount of investment is taken into account, 'the total passenger traffic is very weak', she said. While 16 million people a year use the AVE each year, that is equal to just 15% of the passengers using France's high-speed network and 5% of the passengers using Japan's network, she said."

Ref: AFP, The Age, 4/1/11

UK Greens Oppose HS2 Fast Rail

"Today's Green Party conference in Cardiff came out overwhelmingly against the HS2 proposal for a Birmingham-London 250 mph train. The Greens, who say they remain committed to genuine improvements in public transport, voted overwhelmingly to campaign against the HS2 project which goes to consultation on Monday, saying proposals currently on the table would be 'economically and environmentally unsound'. The Green Party remains in favour of high speed rail in principle, but any project would need to meet strict criteria. Green Party leader Caroline Lucas MP said: 'The Green Party is opposed to the current HS2 proposals. The economic case is unsound.

"The claims about reducing CO2 emissions are questionable to say the least. And the huge damage which would be caused to local communities and their environment would be unsustainable'. Transport expert and Green Party spokesperson on sustainable development Professor John Whitelegg said: 'The proposed HS2 trains would burn 50% more energy mile-for-mile than the Eurostar. HS2 would produce more than twice the emissions of an intercity train. HS2 is a 'rich person's railway' – the business case assumes that a third of passengers will be on incomes of £70,000 or more. Everyone knows the Greens and passionately committed to social justice and to the environment. The current HS2 proposals would serve neither'."

Ref: UK Green Party Website, 26/2/11

Feedback

"I have to comment. I used to enjoy reading this newsletter and even made an unpublished contribution, however I've noticed that the theme of the newsletters has gradually progressed more towards demonising individual transport, and even potentially demonising those who choose to use it. Previously I felt it had an acknowledgement that, while not ideal, individual transport was a reality that needed to be considered.

"This can best be shown by referencing the photograph shown in [a recent] edition (#188) in reference to dust pollution in London, a city in which I lived for 18 months from 2006-2008. In my opinion, this photo very disingenuously shows exhaust condensation from a car on a cold (possibly snowy) London morning – weather conditions which could be expected to occur 6-7 months of the year, and could be witnessed coming from innumerable exhaust flues for heaters/hot water systems, as well as cars. Putting the best light on it, readers deserve an apology for using a bad photo without adequate examination to illustrate a point (in a similar method as news articles regarding greenhouse gas emissions showing video of power station cooling towers). At the other end of the spectrum, then readers deserve an apology for being misled with 'evidence' to support a pre-conceived

conclusion. Perhaps the emphasis should have been on the age and emissions of the car – without further details shown, it looks to be a 15-20 year old Rover (since there appears to be, on the far right, a similar cloud coming from the much newer vehicle behind). For what it's worth, in my experience one of the worst places in London for visible airborne dust was on the underground, with train brake dust, traction motor commutator carbon dust, filings from third/fourth-rail current collection shoes, dust from door mechanisms, condensation and water vapour for trains entering tunnels on wet / snowy days, all filling up the air with distinct aromas and definite haze (the Victoria or Piccadilly line platforms at Green Square spring to mind, or just about any Northern line stations in the City). I also used to work on the 22nd storey of an office tower near Buckingham Palace, which would be a good place to judge microscopic dust due to reduction of visibility, and rarely was haze visible.

"The following story [in #188], regarding 4WDs in the city, shows similar contempt for the rights of individuals to live their lives as they see fit. While I, by no means, support the use of 4WDs (or other large road-based vehicles, such as delivery trucks) in cities, I don't see how the comments / thoughts are published for 'amusement', unless it's to appeal to a small demographic who believe that those who have different views to them are to be laughed at, scorned, pitied or ignored. Ironically, in my experience, usually people from this same demographic have all-inclusive beliefs regarding people's rights on such things as marriage to whom they choose regardless of gender, racial/ethnic background, age, or any other number of topics where we (quite rightly) have anti-discrimination laws.

"Now, I believe that each person has a right to live freely, but responsibly to their society, and the sustainability (or otherwise) of our lifestyle, cities, transport mechanisms, food and energy supply is of such importance that every individual should be informed and educated about them, to then be able to make appropriate decisions for their way of life. I have worked in public transport, freight transport, energy distribution, and manufacturing since 1997, and I've noticed significant changes to the way that societies have communally chosen to do things – most notably in the increased use of public transport over the last five years, with growth which hasn't tapered off in the same way that petrol prices have in the last two. People need to have choice in how they do things – and merely being presented with a road and a car isn't a choice, however much vehicle manufacturers like to market it as such, however living along a train or tram line and having transport dictated by a timetable isn't a choice either. I'm not in favour of the construction of additional roads to relieve congestion, and liken it to curing drug addiction by having another shot. I would like to see further development of public transport in a way that's meaningful, useful to people, provides connections, and where passengers are not reliant on a timetable.

"I value the newsletter and the diversity of stories it brings (particularly the recent inclusion of the Phaic Tan references). I would like to see the Newsletter maintain a balanced approach to the issues that are raised, rather than descending into the realms of personal opinions and 'I told you so' type reporting [which is] better left to the tabloids."

Alex Pout, 23/2/11

> The photo from *The Independent* article I took as illustrative and my assumption was that the car exhaust fumes were kicking up dust particles from the road. The selection of comments from the readers was a fair representation and I think at least some of them were trying to be amusing.

Stephen Ingrouille, 23/2/11