

Almost Car-Free Suburb

"The Baillieu government is considering plans for a carbon-neutral, high-density suburb of 12,000 on Footscray Road, in West Melbourne. In the latest long-discussed inner city housing project, work to turn old rail yards into a more than \$6 billion neighbourhood known as E-Gate could begin as early as 2014. It would be Victoria's largest development since Docklands. The government confirmed E-Gate would be the first big part of its plan to shift urban growth from Melbourne's fringes to its heart."

"Major Projects Minister Denis Napthine said work would begin on the 20-hectare E-Gate site before a bigger project on land zoned light-industrial at Fishermans Bend near the Westgate Bridge, for which The Age revealed plans last month. A third proposal is to use land around Richmond train station for housing. ... He said E-Gate would be pedestrian-friendly, rather than car-free as proposed by [consultants] Aecom, and would include affordable housing. 'Here is a great site, very close to the CBD and next door to public transport', Mr Napthine said. 'It is a very significant development for Melbourne and for Victoria because we want to grow the population without massively contributing to urban sprawl'. ... The layout of the suburb would be inspired by the Hoddle Grid and would take advantage of proximity to Moonee Ponds Creek."
Ref: Mark Dobbin and Jason Dowling, The Age, 10/3/11



Artist's impression of the proposed suburb

Ref: The Age, 10/3/11

More on the 2011 Transport Awards

Guangzhou, China was the winning of the 2011 Sustainable Transport Award {see # 185}. Here are the honourable mentions:

- **"León in Mexico**, home of Mexico's first BRT, now achieving a level of integration unsurpassed in the region. Dario Hidalgo, Director of Research and Practice at EMBARQ, explained: 'León was Mexico's pioneer in introducing integrated bus systems and BRT in 2003; now they have scaled their system from 35% to 65% of the transit trips, through route reorganization and continued inclusion of the local bus operators. León has also an extraordinary track record in active transport, keeping the biking and walking share above 39% of the total trips, one of the highest values in Latin American cities'.
- **"Tehran, Iran**, where the introduction of congestion charging complements the city's expansion of its metro and BRT systems. Lloyd Wright, Executive Director of Viva Cities, commented: 'Over the past several years, Tehran has faced one of the world's most severe air quality crises. The local climate, topography, and sharp growth in private cars have all conspired to create a lingering air quality emergency over the city. The national and local government have responded boldly. Investments in quality rail and BRT are re-defining public transport in Tehran, and a move towards new cycle and pedestrian infrastructure is helping to transform mobility patterns as well. Even more boldly, though, the government has begun the process of reducing fuel subsidies. In all, Tehran is developing a package of carrots and sticks that will hopefully steer the city towards a more sustainable mobility path."
- **"Nantes in France**, where the integration of its bus light rapid transit with its tramway network presents a model of efficient coordination. Heather Allen, Senior Manager, Sustainable Development, International Association of Public Transport, argued: 'Ambitious targets, vision combined with integrated planning and sustained investment have paid big dividends in Nantes. Last year it made significant progress in integrating its tramway and bus system, promoting bicycling and continuing to shift people away from cars. Its integrated transport system helps make it one of the most liveable cities in Europe'.
- **"Lima, Peru**, where the long-awaited BRT is the first step towards creating an integrated citywide sustainable transport system. Sergio Sánchez, Director, Clean Air Institute for Latin America, said: 'Lima has finally made considerable progress with planning, designing and launching its new BRT system'."

Ref: ITDP, 31/1/11 www.itdp.org/index.php/sustainable_transport_award/

Learning to Walk (Part 1)

"My oldest child starts school on Monday. He will walk or ride the 1-kilometre distance every day of the year – rain, hail or shine. Initially, he will travel with a parent or other local children and their families. When he is older and more confident, he will travel by himself and with friends. He will learn to negotiate the neighbourhood, traffic and strangers. Importantly, he will get to play, find interesting things, kick a stone along a street, learn tricks on his bike, socialise and much more."

"People walking for leisure, pleasure or purpose are a marker of a healthy community. Neighbourhoods where people walk to local destinations, shops, work or school with a dog, by themselves or with others indicate a healthier, happier, more socially connected community. As a community, we should encourage children (where age appropriate) to walk without an adult as part of their development. If children are able to walk without adults we are building their capacity for resilience and independence. If our streets are not child, or senior, friendly, our community is failing miserably. We need to encourage children's footsteps and laughter on our streets, whether this be through walking to school, around their neighbourhood or playing. Given the climate of fear around abduction and child molestation, this is no small task. Promoting independent mobility for children should be a priority for all levels of government and the wider community. Walking and playing independently helps children learn how to deal with situations, make decisions, explore and have fun. The physical, social and developmental benefits are enormous."

"Since the 1970s there has been a massive decline in children walking to school, people walking to work and walking generally. This decline is extremely significant as physical inactivity and obesity are rising at an alarming rate. Only 37% of Australian adults do enough exercise for it to benefit their health. Research indicates that 61% of adults are overweight or obese, as are 25% of children aged 5–17. The total cost of obesity to the Australian economy is estimated to be \$37.7 billion. Walking can be an effective way to combat obesity. It is the most popular and readily attainable form of exercise. "In safe, attractive and vibrant communities, people are more likely to walk and be physically active and experience a better quality of life. Building walking into everyday life offers one of the greatest opportunities to increasing physical activity. We need to increase the number of children walking to school. But, focusing on the school journey alone is not enough. We also need to get children walking to friends, shops and parks and socialising on their streets whenever and wherever they can."

{Continued in #193}

Ref: Ben Rossiter, The Age, 4/2/11

"Finally some sense. Kids being wrapped up in 4WD bubbles and delivered to school causes unnecessary traffic, makes our kids lazy and doesn't allow them to experience the reality of roads, transport and everyday life in the streets. Harden up Australia."

"It doesn't always have to be about safety or transport or doing one's protective duty. It can be about much needed exercise and downtime together, and it is good for mum (or dad) to get a little fresh air and exercise too, even before a busy day making millions."



Photo: Peter Stoop, The Age, 4/2/11

"It is so true. My children walked to school, and walked around our suburb all the time. Many people were horrified by this, and I could tell they were thinking things like: 'Just wait till they get abducted, or rolled, that'll teach you'. But, on the few occasions that it looked like something even remotely suss might happen, my kids were able to think on their feet and take evasive action. Also, because they knew their area, they knew when something seemed a bit amiss, and were alert to this. Another benefit of having children and adults walking around is that it lowers the crime rate. Many crimes are of an opportunistic nature. If a potential criminal has a constant flow of traffic around, and that traffic is local people who are knowledgeable about and interested in their community, then it is much more difficult to remain inconspicuous and commit an offence. I think that children miss out on an important part of their development if they never get to utilise self-reliance."

"The more affluent the suburb/family, the more mollycoddled and overprotected is the child. This is my observation."

Ref: Readers' Comments, The Age, 4/2/11

Car Share

"Car-sharing companies push some of the environmental benefits – one share car is believed to take seven cars off the road – and for many commuters giving up the car can amount to annual savings of thousands of dollars. The cost of longer-term car-sharing is comparable to mainstream car hire, although petrol is sometimes included in the fee. Parking spots for share cars are multiplying on the streets of inner-Sydney councils – Sydney has the most, followed by North Sydney, Marrickville, Waverley, Randwick and Leichhardt. But new planning requirements mean car sharing is expanding into the car parks of office blocks and apartment buildings. Developers have also tapped into the phenomenon, which allows them to reduce the number of car spaces in residential developments in return for more car-share spots. Last year the City of Sydney council introduced rules requiring one car-share space for every 50 apartments in new developments."

Ref: Vanda Carson, SMH, 4/2/11

What the Market Doesn't Want

"Large car sales continue to drop as [Australian] buyers look for smaller, more fuel efficient vehicles. ... The trend to smaller cars is ... putting pressure on the whole local manufacturing industry, that comprises Ford, Holden and Toyota, [who are] reliant on large and medium cars. The latest figures from the FCAI (Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries) show that locally made cars are down 21.4% year-to-date, with less than 20,000 sold."

Ref: Stephen Ottley, The Age, 4/3/11

Grand Prix Problems

"The Grand Prix event is a celebration of fast and aggressive driving, and is staged on public roads with the imprimatur of the State Government. It is irrefutable that watching it will tend to encourage imitation, particularly in the case of young impressionable people. The Grand Prix event delivers a very negative road safety message which will only help to increase the road toll. ... There appears to be a disturbing parallel between the locations of secondary schools attending the Grand Prix in recent years and the top 10 'hoon' areas as identified by Victoria Police in their records of impounded cars since 2006."

Ref: Peter Logan, Save Albert Park Media Release, 15/3/11

"The lavish annual Australian Grand Prix ball has been dumped and replaced with a more austere reception after a demand by Premier Ted Baillieu to cut costs. The change, confirmed by Grand Prix Corporation chairman Ron Walker, comes amid growing questions over the race's future in Melbourne because of its soaring cost to tax-payers. Losses topped \$50 million last year and have been tipped to hit \$70 million by 2015."

Ref: Josh Gorton and Reid Sexton, The Age, 11/3/11



"Harold sets a shocking example for those young car hoons"

"One of those sports that definitely only makes sense if you watch it on the telly. Also of you live within 20 k's of Albert Park [Melbourne] you'll be able to turn down the volume, open the windows and hear the cars going around for real."

Ref: M Magazine, The Age, 20/3/11

More on Canadian Oil Sands

"The province must do a better job of monitoring the impact of oil sands mining on water quality in north-eastern Alberta, concludes a scientific panel. Environment Minister Rob Renner appointed the six-member panel in September 2010 after a University of Alberta study concluded industry was responsible for increased levels of toxins in the Athabasca River, a claim contradicted by government scientists. The panel reviewed two U of A studies, and one each from Alberta Environment and the oil sands industry. It found industry and government monitoring is inadequate in determining the amount of toxins entering the environment."

Ref: CBC News (Canada), 9/3/11



Photo: Canada Press

More on Peak Oil

"It's getting more and more difficult to deny that an oil supply crunch is just a few years down the road, especially now that WikiLeaks has released cables revealing that Saudi Arabia's oil reserves have been exaggerated by as much as 40%, or 300 billion barrels. Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil exporter. Peak oil, or the point when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction has been reached and is about to enter terminal decline, is no longer the fringe theory it was just 10 years ago. Even Jeroen van der Veer, the chief executive of Royal Dutch Shell, has admitted that oil supply may no longer keep up with demand by 2015. But the just-released cables, which detail a back-and-forth between the U.S. consul general and geologist Sadad al-Husseini, the former head of exploration at Saudi Aramco, confirms that the situation is serious. ... Other cables from the U.S. embassy in Riyadh go on to express fears that 'Saudi Aramco is having to run harder to stay in place – to replace the decline in existing production ...'"

Ref: Ariel Schwartz, Fast Company, 9/2/11

"In a rare moment of candor, Jeroen van der Veer, the chief executive of Royal Dutch Shell, acknowledged what many have long considered a forgone conclusion: the end of the oil era is almost upon us, and sooner than you might think. ... 'Regardless of which route we choose, the world's current predicament limits our manoeuvring room. We are experiencing a step-change in the growth rate of energy demand due to population growth and economic development, and Shell estimates that after 2015 supplies of easy-to-access oil and gas will no longer keep up with demand.'"

Ref: Jeremy Jacquot, Treehugger, 26/1/08

Oil Trade

"In January, America's foreign oil bill rose 9.5%, or \$US3.04 billion, to \$US34.9 billion. That's the highest monthly total since October 2008. ... [But] more expensive oil isn't bad news for everyone. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Venezuela and other OPEC members, as well as Russia and Mexico, benefit from the rise in prices."

Ref: AP, The Age, 11/3/11

"PepsiCo says it has invented the world's first plastic bottle made entirely from plant-based, fully renewable resources. ... The biggest difference is that manufacturing the bottle requires the use of no petroleum. Instead, it is made from such renewable materials as switch grass, pine bark and corn husks."

Ref: SMH, 17/3/11

The Transition from Petrol

"The first step is to agree that we are going to have smaller cars, that don't need to go so fast, and don't need to be so powerful. If we agree on that we cut our petroleum use in half, then the transition to anything else [like electric vehicles] becomes simple. ... If you have an Australian or US size car or SUV, you are really running the risk that you won't be able to fuel it. That's where the great change has to be. So its smaller cars, driven less, and then we have a lot more choices."

Ref: Lee Schipper, By Design, ABC Radio National, 2/2/11

www.abc.net.au/rn/bydesign/stories/2011/3122148.htm

"After 7 years in London with no car, we decided not to have one when returning to Melbourne three years ago. People told us it couldn't be done but it's the best decision anyone could make. We've got two primary school-age kids who are strong and fit with all the cycling and walking. We're experts on local Public Transport options to get us anywhere around Melbourne. We borrow/hire car/take taxis when we need. It's given us a better life and we enjoy the journey. It can be done!!"

"I have three cars and a tractor, though I drive less than previously. I would use the most appropriate vehicle for the task at hand if registration was transferable, or if I got the electric car registration free with the petrol car. ... Most of the cost of keeping a car is artificial and created by tax and insurance setups which could be easily changed to favour a lower carbon economy. Road Traffic Authority and insurance habits are the real obstacle to change."

"I used public transport yesterday for a short trip to attend a meeting in the city. The total travel time was 148 minutes, 25 of which was waiting for the next train. That was 104 minutes more than when I used my car and walked from a city car park. I'll bet there is not a single guest on By Design who would look a client in the face and tell them that the extra couple of hundred bucks they're being charged each meeting is because that's the additional time cost of public transport. By the way, the difference between the parking fee and two single ticket receipts (for tax purposes) was about \$10."

Ref: Listener's Comments, By Design, ABC Radio, 2/2/11

www.abc.net.au/rn/bydesign/stories/2011/3122148.htm

"Fringe benefits tax concessions for company cars, which create an incentive to drive more, cost \$1.1 billion a year. (There's no tax incentive to use efficient, low-emissions public transport)."

Ref: John Watson, SMH, 10/3/11

Airline News

"China is our fastest growing aviation market. ... Last year, more than 1.7 million people travelled between Australia and China – an increase of 21% on the previous year (2009). Indeed the value of Chinese tourism to our economy already exceeds \$3.1 billion, a figure that's only like to grow significantly in the line with the expected doubling in number of Chinese tourists by 2020."

Ref: Federal Government Media Statement, 7/3/11

"Indian aviation regulators have found two more pilots with forged qualifications flying passenger planes ... raising questions about safety on the country's booming airlines. ... Last month ... a third pilot ... who was found to have forged papers ... had landed planes incorrectly between 10 and 15 times, India Media said."

Ref: AFP, The Age, 10/3/11

Problems for Walkers in US Cities

"The worst city for walkers in the US? Not New York which ranks among the safest in a 2009 study of pedestrian un-friendly cities. The four deadliest metropolitan areas are all in Florida: Orlando, Tampa, Miami and Jacksonville. True, New York has a higher number of fatalities, but with 2.86 deaths per 100,000 people a year, Orlando has a pedestrian fatality rate almost double that of the Big Apple, according to the non profit group Transportation for America. When devising its 'pedestrian danger index', which measures risk, the organisation took into account the amount of walking people do in each location. Other problem cities include Memphis, Houston, and Atlanta. Florida's abundance of older drivers is not to blame for its dubious status. Transportation for America faults the state's urban sprawl and roads designed to move high volumes of cars as quickly as possible"

Ref: Vikki Valentine, National Geographic, July 2010

"When cities were ranked according to their safety level for walking, Florida didn't do well. You might think being blessed as the 'Sunshine State', Floridians would have made better use of their resources for making good walking spaces and routes. ... Another graph points to data in the 360 biggest metro areas in America. Punta Gorda comes in the worst for Florida. In fact, all 20 Florida metro areas fare worse than many states listed. I lived in Florida for a few months and can vouch for the lack of pedestrian resources, but this is ridiculous! I do remember a street outside of the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Tampa getting named something like 'safest street design for pedestrians' by the Tampa Tribune. It was funny, because there weren't even sidewalks on the street. Turns out, it was the only street entered and won by default. Shows you the level of commitment to pedestrian safety in good old Tampa."

Ref: Jeff Musall, Associated Content from Yarrhoo, 9/11/09

"Cities in the United States that are unfriendly toward pedestrians may also contribute to rising obesity rates. ... A 2004 study by researchers at the University of British Columbia found a direct link between the layout of a city and the probability that a resident would be obese. The more sprawling the area where a study participant lived, the more likely that participant was to be obese. The study found that '[each] additional hour spent in a car per day was associated with a 6% increase in the likelihood of obesity', while the study also found that each kilometre walked per day decreased the overall likelihood of obesity."

Ref: Haley Lovett, Finding Dulcinea, 16/6/10

More on Trees vs Roundabout

"The National Trust and a residents' group have slammed a VicRoads plan for a smaller roundabout to bisect Bacchus Marsh's The Avenue of Honour. A \$25 million bypass of the town was halted in December when Heritage Victoria refused a permit for the roundabout, at the Woolpack Road intersection. Heritage Victoria executive director Jim Gardner said it would have interrupted the 'cathedral-like' canopy of trees commemorating World War I soldiers that runs 3.3 kilometres from the Western Highway into town.

VicRoads has come up with an altered design for its appeal to the Heritage Council to revoke the Heritage Victoria decision. The diameter of the roundabout's inner circle would be shrunk and a concrete apron around it would accommodate B-double trucks. Five - rather than the original nine - elm trees would be removed, and their replacements planted on the roundabout. ... But National Trust conservation manager Paul Roser said the Trust remains opposed to a roundabout. 'The reduction in tree loss and slightly smaller size of the roundabout still leaves a gaping hole' ... It will destroy the integrity of the arched canopy effect of the Avenue. It's only very small total reduction in the size of the roundabout, a matter of two or three metres in diameter', he said.



Bacchus Marsh's The Avenue of Honour

Photo: Tourism Victoria

"Avenue Preservation Group spokeswoman Katrina Bradfield said: 'There is still going to be an impact on The Avenue of Honour, regardless of how many trees there will be removed - one, or five, or nine. We don't want a roundabout in the Avenue. We don't want trees removed for a road. We don't want the road to extend through farmland. In short, we don't want this revised roundabout at all'."

Ref: Carolyn Webb, The Age, 21/3/11

{More on this subject in #182}

Views on Australian Suburbia

"I work in the CBD and have just bought my Australia Dream in Cranbourne [on Melbourne's fringe]. I had the options on either getting a tiny 'renovators dream' 15min from work or build an amazing new house and travel an hour by train to and from work. I chose the later. I couldn't think of anything worse than living close to the city with all the noise, small houses and 'fashion-istas' with their pretentious cafes. An hour on the train give me a chance to read on the way up and a chance to switch off on the way home. I'll take my backyard, big house and open spaces over espresso's and crowded streets any day!"

"I never dreamed of living in the inner suburbs, but now do. I love the closeness of the shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes and the great choice it provides. If I don't feel like going somewhere immediately close to myself, I can walk or catch a tram/train to the city or a number of other areas. I don't understand why people would want to commute an hour each way to work just so they can have a bigger house. ... I have a friend in [the outer suburb of] Rowville and every time she wants to do anything, she has to get in her car. A carton of milk? Get in the car."

"What's out in the burbs? People locked away in their house. Supposedly enjoying their 'dream'. What's happening closing in the civilisation? People out and about interacting with each other, talking in coffee shops, browsing book stores and generally having a good time."

"The constant stream of activity and experiences on your doorstep [in the inner suburbs] is definitely worth sacrificing a McMansion taking up 95% of the block it's on!"

"I use to stand at the school gates in primary school working out how many years I had until I could make my own decisions and get out of the repetitive, suffocating burbs. I hated our caravan in Yarrowonga. I hated our latest Commodore [car]. I preferred Nannas place in [the inner-city] Yarraville ... I now dream about a backyard, quiet tree lined streets, homogenous sedan style cars and tending to a veggie patch!"

"I live in the outer suburbs and love it. There are plenty of takeaways, restaurants, pubs, cinemas, gyms and shopping centres out here. Plus I work out here, only 10mins drive to work. Don't care at all about the city. I'm happy to have a big back yard, swimming pool, open spaces, golf courses nearby, and listen to the sounds of birds in the trees rather than noisy traffic, trams and noisy neighbours that I remember very well when I lived in an inner suburb."

"Some of us are not looking for cheap takeaway and expensive cafes and pubs. Many people are looking for child friendly areas with parks ... etc."

"Urban sprawl will become the future slums on this once great city - invest at your peril ie don't do it!"

Ref: Reader's Comments, The Age, 17/2/11

A few years ago I gave a presentation to one of the Councils on the fringe of Melbourne. I observed something almost alien on my way to the meeting at 6 pm: queues of cars, all with engines running, snaking from the fast food outlets. My key – but of course unheeded – message at a time of escalating petrol prices, was that we need to reconsider the design of our suburbs and become less dependent on the motor vehicle. I advocated the concept of urban villages – appropriate density & building height developments, with an emphasis on walking, cycling, local food production and renewable energy. These are important for safer, healthier and more equitable suburbs.

At the end of my talk at 8 pm I passed the same fast food outlets, with the car queues just as long. The other strange thing on a pleasant, clement evening was that I was almost the only pedestrian on the streets. The walk to the railway station, through the enormous surrounding car park certainly felt unsafe. It took almost two hours by train and tram to return to my own village in the inner suburbs. Here at 10 pm at night the contrast was marked: the cars were minimal, the footpaths were busy with people eating or strolling, the tram was reasonably full. It felt safe.

There are valid reasons for encouraging infill development rather than urban sprawl on the fringes of our cities but the real question where ever we develop is: why not learn lessons from those spaces in Melbourne that work well? This is not to say that we want exact duplication, which is unlikely to occur

anyway for topographic and demographic reasons, but we could take the best ideas from the past – before the dependence on oil – and mix them with best current technologies.

Perhaps the most important factor in the design of sustainable suburbs is the interconnecting modes of transport. This is not lost on our citizens as demonstrated by simultaneous public meetings on this subject recently: one at Federation Square and one at Melbourne Town Hall – both full. It can also be argued that the issue of public transport in Melbourne was the main reason for change of government at the election. It would be a brave administration that fails to heed this message, particularly with oil prices on the rise again, even though it will take longer than a single election cycle to make all of the adjustments needed.

Stephen Ingrouille. 17/2/11