

## NSW Transport Authority

*"The New South Wales Government has announced a new overarching transport authority to co-ordinate the delivery of services across the state. Under the plan the Roads and Traffic Authority, RailCorp, Sydney Buses and other transport agencies will be stripped of their procurement and long-term planning and policy development powers. Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian says that will allow the agencies to focus entirely on delivering quality services to customers. 'For too long our agencies have been acting in silos. We don't have that co-ordination across all modes of transport. Commuters have borne the brunt of a disjointed system', Ms Berejiklian said. She says there will be fewer backroom jobs but more on the front-line. Further details about the plan were light on the ground, but Ms Berejiklian says it is hoped the new structure will be in place within 12 weeks."*

**Ref: ABC News, 19/4/11**

[www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/19/3195734.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/19/3195734.htm)

## NSW Election

*"Barry O'Farrell's historic election victory has brought the Liberal-National Coalition to office for the first time in 16 years. At long last we now have a Government with a fresh and energetic new vision for the State and a real commitment to bold plans to upgrade infrastructure, especially public transport. First priority is the North-West rail link which is long overdue but also on the agenda is a light rail from Central out along Anzac Parade passing by the SCG, Randwick Racecourse, the University of NSW and Prince of Wales Hospital."*

**Ref: Malcolm Turnbull, Newsletter, 19/4/11**



## Perth's Public Transport

*"Perth commuters face a double whammy of unaffordable petrol prices and inefficient public transport unless governments move their funding focus away from roads, a new report has claimed. The Australian Conservation Foundation research showed that in the past decade local, state and federal governments spent three times more on roads in WA than other transport infrastructure such as bridges, ports and railways. Across the country, governments spent 4.3 times more on roads. Funding for WA road construction totalled \$7.2 billion – or 0.42% of gross state product – compared to \$2.2 billion (0.18% of GSP) on other transport, including the Mandurah railway line, the report said. That equated to \$525 per person for roads and \$119 per person for other transport."*

*"The action group said such spending patterns needed to be converted to help shield commuters from the combination of inevitable drastic petrol price rises and transport infrastructure unable to cope with the needs of a rapidly growing population. It claimed Australia would move from importing about 50% of its oil to about 70% by 2015 and said the strong Australian dollar was the only thing protecting our country from higher petrol prices. While transport issues threatened the entire country, Perth was particularly vulnerable because of its sprawling 140-kilometre coastline and significant dependency on cars, which is one of the highest in the world for developed cities. 'What we have to really be aware of is the price of petrol is going to go up and Perth is very spread out [so] it's going to become unaffordable for people to use their cars', [ACF's] sustainable transport campaigner, Gail Broadbent, said. ..."*

*"RAC head of member advocacy Matt Brown said while transport solutions needed to become 'smarter', there was no room to reduce road spending ... we need a massive investment in [major] roads to keep our economy going because of heavy vehicle usage. 'Public transport is never going to be the answer because it lacks the volumes. It's just too simplistic to say we have spent too much on roads and not enough on public transport'. But Ms Broadbent said the Mandurah railway line demonstrated that if governments built public transport, commuters would come – as long as there were efficient services. 'The building of the Mandurah rail line was really well received by the public, it attracted a lot of patronage immediately – a lot higher than they anticipated', she said. But ironically, the service's popularity has also led to criticism because the state government has failed to meet demand, leading to overcrowded carriages and forcing many commuters to drive instead."*

**Ref: Courtney Trenwith, WA Today 28/4/11**

## Auckland and Oil

*"Auckland City's discussion document (['Auckland Unleashed'](#)) makes the case for a compact city, well served and made more liveable (and economically successful) by an integrated, efficient public transport system. The National government's cabinet papers by comparison support a 'more of the same' approach, more expansion of the city's footprint, and investment that perpetuates Auckland as a car-centric city. The Government's justification for this is not persuasive, even if you assume no changes in external conditions. Their analysis becomes even less convincing when you notice the elephant in the room that the government studiously ignores; that is the inevitability of continuing rises in the price of liquid fuel as peak oil effects kick in.*

*"The time when peak oil could be dismissed as a mad conspiracy theory is long past, unless one thinks that the International Energy Agency is complicit in the deception. The Agency's official line is that peak oil will occur in 2030, but this is seen as highly optimistic even by Dr Faith Birol, the agency's own chief economist. Birol thinks that 2020 or sooner is more likely, and has stated the problem very clearly, saying: 'One day we will run out of oil, it is not today or tomorrow, but one day we will run out of oil and we have to leave oil before oil leaves us'.*

*"Incidentally, that other hotbed of radical environmentalism, the US Joint Forces Command, expects a 2012 peak. What all this means of course is that we are most unlikely to see the price of a litre of fuel drop below the new baseline of NZ\$2.00, and it is more likely to stay well above that. This means that filling the tank on even a modest family car will stay around the NZ\$100 mark, a big chunk out of any house-hold's weekly budget.*



**Great Australian Bight** Photo: Herald Sun

*"The [NZ] Automobile Association has entered the fray suggesting that putting more costs on motorists in order to fund public transport initiatives means that only the rich will be able to afford to drive. The reality is that affordability is already an issue. Spending on infrastructure that further embeds dependence on private vehicles rather than reducing it, in the face of increasing prices, is just foolish, and will guarantee that we fail to achieve environmental, social or economic sustainability for our city."*

**Ref: David Clendon, Frogblog 28/3/11**

*"Our current transport system is inadequate for meeting Auckland's needs now. Surveys indicate that the overwhelming majority of Aucklanders want the transport system fixed, and there is widespread belief that we have to change our approach to providing transport infrastructure and services. A key part of the future transport system must be about making a radical improvement in the level of public transport to compliment investment in the road network. We have three public transport options available: rail, bus and ferry.*

*"The Mayor and Councillors are strongly committed to the CBD rail loop linking to the western line as essential in transforming transport services and the rail network, and as a way of shaping a vibrant international city centre. The rail loop and associated city centre are vital to the Mayor's vision of Auckland as the world's most liveable city and an economic powerhouse. Rail to the airport and provision for a second harbour crossing within the 30-year plan are two more goals."*

**Ref: Discussion Document, Auckland City Council, 18/2/11**

## The Last Bite of the Oil Pie?

*"BP Australia will spend \$1.43 billion trying to find a rich new offshore oil region in the Great Australian Bight, one of the world's last great resource frontiers. The petroleum industry believes the 800,000 sq km expanse has similar potential to rich oil and gas provinces off Africa and South America. ... If successful, the Bight could provide a major oil and gas reserve for Australia with a commercially viable 100 million barrel field worth \$10 billion at today's oil prices. [Just 5 days supply for the US alone at current usage rates of 20 million barrels per day] ... BP Australia spokesman Jamie Jardine said the exploration area was ... almost 700km southwest of Port Lincoln, in water between 140m and 4600m depth. The lightly explored area is one of the last potentially great oil resources in the world because it*

is in such deep water. Mr Jardine said that typically, one in 10 oil wells in the past 100 years has produced commercial volumes of oil. 'We believe it is prospective, but only time will tell whether it will be a commercial discovery', he said. ... Conservation groups yesterday urged caution because the exploration area is in a fragile marine environment."

**Ref: Nigel Austin, Herald Sun, 5/4/11**

## And Also ...

"Australia is a very confusing place, taking up a large amount of the bottom half of the planet. It is recognizable from orbit because of many unusual features, including what looks like an enormous bite taken out of its southern edge; a wall of sheer cliffs which plunge deep into the girding sea. Geologists assure us that this is simply an accident of geomorphology and plate tectonics, but they still call it the 'Great Australian Bight' proving that not only are they covering up a more frightening theory but they can't spell either!"

**Ref: Douglas Adams (on Australia), C15/4/11**

## More on Deep Sea Oil Drilling

"John Key's Government should not allow exploration for deep sea oil in New Zealand waters before the industry proves it can plug oil leaks in deep water, said the Green Party today. 'John Key stated this morning that he believes the Government can manage the environmental risks of deep sea oil drilling. The Prime Minister should share with us the basis of that belief', said Green Party spokesperson for deep water oil drilling David Clendon. 'What clever technology or response plan does John Key know about that no-one else has heard of?'

"Brazilian energy company Petrobras began exploring last week for oil and gas in a 12,000 square kilometre area in the Raukumara Basin off East Cape. 'A deep water oil leak would be an environmental catastrophe. The nearest rig that could help fix it would be months away. .... Without a safety plan, oil drilling off our shores poses an unacceptable environmental, social and economic risk' said Mr Clendon."

**Ref: NZ Green Party Media Release, 11/4/11**

"New Zealand has sent a naval vessel to ensure a high-seas dispute between Greenpeace activists and a Brazilian-owned vessel exploring for oil does not escalate, police confirmed Tuesday. ... Greenpeace climate campaigner Steve Abel said protesters were sending an 'emphatic message' to the government that deep sea oil drilling would not be tolerated in New Zealand waters. 'If we don't stop this initial deep sea oil exploration, rigs could be off coasts all around New Zealand in the near future, each one increasing the risk of spills and fuelling climate change as the oil is burnt'. ... Police had been in contact with Greenpeace and Petrobras and assured both sides 'that safety and the lawful right to protest and to conduct the lawfully permitted survey work is paramount'."

**Ref: AFP, West Australian, 12/4/11**

## Oil and Jobs

"Oil refiner Shell Australia says competition from new mega-refineries in Asia has forced it to consider shutting down one of its two local refineries. The company is planning to stop refining operations at its 75,000 barrel-per-day refinery at Clyde in Western Sydney and instead use it as a distribution point for local and imported refined products like petrol. The refinery employs 310 staff, with that figure to be reduced to between 30 and 50 to operate the site as a fuel import terminal. If the proposal goes ahead, it would leave the company's Geelong site as its sole local refinery."

**Ref: ABC News/AAP, 12/4/11**

"In the latest blow to the local car making industry, Ford Australia is set to shed 240 factory workers' jobs and cut production by 20% from 260 to 209 vehicles a day from July. Ford Australia president Bob Graziano told The Age this morning a slump in demand for large cars had forced the decision."

**Ref: Andrew Heasley, The Age, 14/4/11**



**Fracking**

*"Oil and gas companies injected hundreds of millions of litres of hazardous or carcinogenic chemicals into wells in more than 13 US states from 2005-09, an investigation by congressional Democrats has found. The chemicals were used by companies during a drilling process known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, which involves the high-pressure injection of a mixture of water, sand and chemical additives into rock formations deep underground. The process, which is being used to tap into large reserves of natural gas around the US, opens fissures in the rock to stimulate the release of oil and gas."*

*"Fracking has attracted increased scrutiny from legislators and environmentalists in part because of fears that the chemicals used during the process can contaminate underground sources of drinking water. 'Questions about the safety of hydraulic fracturing persist, which are compounded by the secrecy surrounding the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing fluids', said the congressional report [which] also faulted companies for at times 'injecting fluids containing chemicals that they themselves cannot identify'. ... More than 650 of these products contained chemicals that are known or possible human carcinogens, or are listed as hazardous air pollutants, the report said. Some of the ingredients mixed into the hydraulic fracturing fluids were common and generally harmless, such as salt and citric acid. ... Many of the ingredients were 'extremely toxic', including benzene, a known human carcinogen, and lead."*

**Ref: Ben Cubby, The Age, 18/4/11**

**On the Melbourne Airport Rail (Part 1)**

*"The idea of a high-speed Melbourne Airport-to-CBD rail line is in the news yet again, this time advocated by the RACV. You've got to give the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria its due. While simultaneously calling for road works to reduce congestion and improvements to Hoddle Street, it's morphing into a general transport lobby group that 'advocates improved transport services for all its members, including those who use public transport'. ... Even while they approvingly cite the example of Sydney's and Brisbane's airport trains, [people] nevertheless generally assume an airport train would be high speed, would solve congestion on Melbourne's freeways and would cost no more than a Zone 1-2 fare. ... Here're twelve reasons why a rail line to Melbourne Airport is unlikely to make sense for a while yet."*

*"First, Skybus already provides a dedicated public transport service from the airport to the CBD with higher frequencies and longer span of hours than any train service in Melbourne. Most times trips to Southern Cross station take 20 minutes. While they blow out to over 40 mins in peak hour, that could be addressed for a fraction of the cost of a new rail line by extending the existing dedicated on-road lane to other sections of the route that are prone to congestion."*

*"Second, there's little to be gained from spending more than a billion dollars to replace a high quality public transport service (Skybus) with another one (train), when the money could be spent on providing better public transport to areas that don't currently have adequate service."*

*"Third, every study undertaken to date has concluded that a rail service isn't warranted. It might be in the future but not yet. In the meantime, there is considerable potential to increase the capacity and speed of Skybus. ..."*

*"Fourth, the only two airport train systems in Australia, in Brisbane and Sydney, both experienced severe financial difficulties. Both now make money, Sydney's after going into receivership and being sold at a loss, and Brisbane's by cutting back services. Brisbane's trains operate on a 30 minute frequency and stop operation after 8 pm on a weekday. Melbourne's Skybus runs every ten minutes for most of the day and operates 24/7. Buses already carry a higher proportion of travellers to Melbourne Airport than trains do at either Sydney or Brisbane."*

*"Fifth, the 901 orbital SmartBus now provides a Zone 1-2 fare to the airport. It runs on a 15 minute frequency for most of the day and operates until midnight. Travellers can transfer to a CBD train at Broadmeadows station or take the SmartBus as far as Frankston via Epping, Greens-borough, Ringwood and Dandenong. Skybus also offers concession fares to airport workers."*

*"Sixth, it is extremely unlikely that any dedicated train service would be offered at a Zone 1-2 fare because that would incur an operating loss, whereas Skybus is profitable and hence cost the State*

nothing. Both the Sydney & Brisbane trains charge \$15 one-way from the domestic terminal to the CBD. Skybus charges \$16 (for a longer trip). There are [sound arguments](#) for charging a different (higher) price for airport travel rather than incurring a substantial ongoing cost to subsidise air travellers, many of whom don't live in Victoria.

"Seventh, it's also highly unlikely that any new train line would be high-speed. That would be very expensive as it would require a dedicated line and rolling stock and higher engineering standards. Those who hold out hope that it could be part of a Sydney–Melbourne High Speed Rail (HSR) project ignore the fact that numerous studies have found HSR is not viable on this route (the Commonwealth is undertaking another study at the moment). Even if political considerations were to drive a start on HSR, it is far more likely the first stages would be constructed around Sydney, probably in the Newcastle–Sydney corridor.

"Eighth, a train would not reduce congestion on Melbourne's freeway system. Most users live in the suburbs and will continue to drive – a rail line to the CBD won't change that. In any event, any space liberated by drivers switching to train would be consumed by induced demand.

"Ninth, even if a train were to win an unprecedented share of all airport ground travel (say 20% – which would put it way ahead of Brisbane and Sydney), this would be an extraordinarily expensive way of reducing GHG emissions." {Continued in #199}

**Ref: Alan Davies, Melbourne Urbanist. 19/4/11**

<http://melbourneurbanist.wordpress.com/2011/04/19/is-the-proposed-airport-train-off-the-rails/>

"With regard to designing PT links to airports, the 'devil in the details' is absolutely everything. At the point of embarking surface transport, airline travellers often suffer fatigue, anxiety in unfamiliar surrounds, lack of knowledge of local transport and other services, carrying heavy baggage, etc."

**Peter Hill, 20/4/11**

## And Also ...

"Northern line (London Underground): 'Ladies and gentlemen we will shortly be arriving at Waterloo, then I think we will carry right on through the channel tunnel and spend the weekend in Paris'."

**Ref: <http://solo2.abac.com/themole/>**

## Bus Rapid Transit (Part 1)

"Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an integrated transportation system that provides a rapid, sustainable and cost-effective urban mobility service with high capacity buses. This transportation alternative provides an opportunity to quickly improve the supply of transit at relatively low cost, considering the performance and other attractive characteristics of modern rail transport system.

"Although no one specific technology defines BRT, the majority of successful systems to date have the following attributes:

- Dedicated or preferential lanes for public transport.
- Rapid boarding and exiting (high platforms).
- Prepayment and charge verification (off-bus fare collection).
- High-capacity modern vehicles with clean technologies.
- Transit priority at intersections.
- Modal integration at stations and terminals.
- Accessibility design that benefits everyone.
- Rigorous planning and operational controls.
- High-quality signage and user information.
- Excellent marketing and customer service.
- A specific image with a brand name.



**Bus Station, Curitiba, Brazil** Photo: Wikipedia

"Curitiba is the capital of the Brazilian state of Paraná. Curitiba's RIT (Integrated Transport Network) was the first BRT system implemented in the world in 1974. Curitiba's city government had well-

deserved attention for managing urban problems with creative strategies making the best use of limited resources. Among the city's most striking successes are those related to coordination of public transportation and land use. Curitiba's population grew from 140,000 in 1940 to 500,000 in 1965, when a new master plan concentrating growth in five radial corridors, including busways, was adopted. Its current (2009) population is about 1.8 million.

"The fleet size in operation at 2007 was reported at 1,100 vehicles (articulated, bi-articulated and feeders) and carried 1.3 million passengers daily. Curitiba's transit system is managed by the Urbanização de Curitiba (URBS, 'Urbanization of Curitiba'), owned privately but managed publicly. URBS administers publicly-owned transport infrastructure, contracts with private companies that operate the buses and monitors their performance. URBS establishes schedules and service standards, sets fares, collects revenues and distributes payments to private companies.

"The Transmilenio system is an icon BRT project launched in 2000 in Bogota, Colombia. Bogota's population is about 6.8 million. The system reports to carry 1.35 million passengers daily on average (2.85 million passengers including feeder lines). The total fleet in the network is 1,018 articulated buses.

"This project was a mass transportation solution using high capacity buses, started as a metro alternative. A particular characteristic of Transmilenio is the two exclusive bus lanes, with express services and a peak load capacity of 35,000-45,000 passenger/hour/direction.

"The Transportation Research Board reports that the 388 kilometres complete network is projected to cost US\$3.3 billion, which is only 10% than a previously proposed Metro of 30 kilometres would have costed." {Continued in #199}

Ref: Domingo Peña, 18/2/10

## And Also ... (Strange Laws)

"In the state of Colorado, a pet cat, if loose, must have a tail-light."

Ref: Strangefacts.com

## Road Pollution & Brain Damage

"Being exposed to highway pollution can cause brain damage in mice akin to memory loss and Alzheimer's disease [according to] US researchers. Scientists recreated the airborne pollutants that come from the burning of fossil fuels and the weathering of car parts and pavement, and exposed mice to the harsh air for 15 hours per week over 10 weeks. The tiny air particles were 'roughly one-thousandth the width of a human hair, and too small for car filtration systems to trap', but exerted massive damage on the brains of the exposed mice, said the study. 'You can't see them, but they are inhaled and have an effect on brain neurons that raises the possibility of long-term brain health consequences of freeway air', said senior author Caleb Finch of the University of Southern California.

"Scientists found that the exposure resulted in 'significant damage' to neurons involved in learning and memory, and they detected 'signs of inflammation associated with premature aging and Alzheimer's disease'. The study is published in the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*. More research is necessary to determine if the same effects could be seen in humans. 'Of course this leads



Transmilenio Bogota, Colombia Photo: GTZ.



Bus Station, Curitiba, Brazil Photo: D Peña



to the question, "How can we protect urban dwellers from this type of toxicity?" And that's a huge unknown', Finch said."

**Ref: AFP, The Age, 8/4/11**

## Road Speed, Casualties & Emissions

*"The UK road safety charity, Brake, is warning that raising the motorway speed limit would be a highly dangerous strategy that would undermine progress in reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on the country's roads. Widespread reports suggest that the government intends to increase motorway speed limits to 129km/h (80mph) from the current 113km/h (70mph), which could be made law before MPs take their summer leave in July. The charity says that research from the Transport Select Committee in 2002 shows that raising the limit would result in a 5-10% increase in motorway casualties.*

*"Brake also says that a rise in motorway speeds would also increase UK fuel consumption and carbon emissions, both of which are of keen concern to the public. A 2006 report from the UK Energy Research Centre shows that at 129km/h (80mph), a petrol car emits 14% more CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometre than driving at 113km/h (70mph), while diesel cars emit 25% more. The charity cites the recent decision of the Spanish government to decrease their motorway limit to 110km/h (68mph) in a bid to cut the country's reliance on oil in an increasingly unstable market and help consumers manage the price hikes they are experiencing. ...*

*"Brake suggests that increasing motorway speeds may not even reduce average journey times, citing the 2002 Transport Committee report on Road Traffic Speed. This found that higher speeds would do little to reduce journey times and that on the country's congested motorways a 129km/h limit might well increase them because it would create an uneven flow. 'It would be simply immoral to raise motorway speed limits when research indicates it would lead to more deaths and serious injuries, which cause devastating trauma to families, and which are a considerable economic burden ... It would also fly in the face of this government's commitment to lower carbon emissions. In short, a decision to raise the ... limit would go against safety, environmental and financial sense."*

**Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 15/3/11**

## Flawed Car Emissions Rating

*"A new environmental rating system is needed for vehicles because its current model is flawed and irrelevant in Australia, according to university research. Rocco Zito from the University of South Australia thinks lab testing methods fail to reflect actual driving conditions. He says cars tested are driven at a consistent speed for an extended time, but there is more variation in city driving speeds, creating more emissions. 'A lot of the testing that we've done here actually shows variation of up to 30% from the real world', he said."*

**Ref: ABC News, 13/4/11**

## And Also ... (Space News)

*"A group of Brisbane researchers are leading a new space race, as they help develop a special beer for intergalactic travellers. Researchers at Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) microgravity 'drop tower' are testing the first Australian space beer, which will cater to the soon-to-launch space tourism industry. QUT's research facility director, Ted Steinberg, said the microgravity tower simulated the low-gravity level present in space, allowing the companies behind the beer to determine how it would be affected by space travel. 'Essentially they're looking at the correct carbonation level so it can be consumed in zero gravity. They're really trying to perfect the carbonation level and behaviour. ... In microgravity, it is possible to make better materials for use on earth or in space, such as unique metals, nanomaterials with more surface area and high-strength glass', he said."*

**Ref: Jodie Stephens, The Age, 7/4/11**

*"And no beer nuts? Call that research?"*

**Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 7/4/11**