

Missing Infrastructure Billions

"Victoria is at risk of losing billions of dollars of federal infrastructure funding because the Baillieu government has failed to deliver a single major project proposal to Australia's independent infrastructure umpire. In a report to state and federal governments, Infrastructure Australia also issues a blunt warning that it is 'very unlikely' to support state government proposals for new freeways unless they are tolled. ... The report identifies two projects in Melbourne as 'ready to proceed' if there were federal funding available to pay for them. The first is a modest \$30 million plan to speed up trams and intensify development along the 86 route, which runs along High Street in Northcote and Preston. The second is the much-debated Melbourne Metro, a \$5 billion rail tunnel that would run from Footscray to the CBD and, in its second stage, to Caulfield. It was first proposed by Sir Rod in a study he did for the Brumby government. The report found that if the Melbourne Metro were built, for every \$1 spent on construction there would be an economic return of \$1.30. The report was cautious on the merits of a controversial east-west road tunnel from the Eastern Freeway to the Tullamarine Freeway, saying it should be considered only if there was joint funding from the Victorian government and a focus on container traffic from the Port of Melbourne."

"In what would amount to a dramatic shift in federal funding, the report demands that state governments stop asking for funding for major freeway projects - unless they are tolled. 'Several submissions to Infrastructure Australia in the past year have continued to focus on the development of large urban motorways, presented as 'freight roads', when, in fact, 80-90% of the projected traffic is expected to be private vehicles', the report says 'In several cases the use of tolls to fund these roads was rejected. At the same time, the [state governments] have asked the Australian government to meet all or the great majority of the costs of these projects'. But unless freeways through urban centres are tolled, the report says, Canberra should no longer consider funding them. The report also calls for tolling on the nation's major highways – including the Hume – to be considered when big improvements are made."

Ref: Josh Gordon and Clay Lucas, The Age, 5/7/11



"Damn Ben Hur and his 6-horse power chariot. Now everyone will want one. And then what ... Freeways?"

"News that the Victorian Government is urgently developing a state infrastructure plan, with fresh consideration being given to an 'east-west' road tunnel, should be welcomed by all Victorian businesses. ... As far as possible, infrastructure should be supplied for good economic and social reasons, not political ones. VECCI is a supporter of the idea of a second cross-city link, to ease the strain on the West Gate Bridge and City Link..."

Ref: Editor, VECCI Blog, 27/6/11

"The public want public transport to mode shift journeys which will reduce traffic congestion and free up existing road space. No city has built its way out of motorway congestion as more roads induce demand, dooming us to the cycle of 'repeat and fail'."

Ref: Jason (comment), VECCI Blog, 27/6/11

"Jason is right. Building freeways through cities is 1960s thinking, particularly in the light of scarce resources (oil) and rising pollution and petrol prices. There are excellent economic and social reasons for focusing on rail freight, public transport and active modes of transit (walking and cycling). Solutions for Melbourne include more rail lines, more tram lines (including smaller 'community trams' in lower density suburbs and freight trams), freight and commuter ferries on Port Phillip Bay, taxi reform, expanded carshare and bikeshare programs, better urban design, valuing our open spaces and evaluating the real cost of free parking."

"To make these changes takes not just political will, but positive leadership by organisations like VECCI. Trying to build your way out of congestion by building more freeways is flawed because it just adds to the negative spiral – more congestion, more pollution, more stress. On the other hand, the formula for better cities is both established and proven – the positive spiral: less congestion, less pollution, better public spaces – and better for business. Why individuals in organisations like VECCI pursue outmoded and counterproductive policies like building freeways needs to be questioned. The debate needs to be encouraged."

Stephen Ingrouille (comment), VECCI Blog, 5/7/11

London Transport Business Plan

"London's transport network will see massive growth in both the number of passengers it carries and the number of services it operates, according to Transport for London's (TfL) revised Business Plan. ... During the next four years a huge program of investment will see three Tube lines fully upgraded with new trains on five lines, major progress on Crossrail, the completion of the London Overground network, traffic flow smoothed, the completion of the Barclays Cycle Superhighways and extension of Barclays Cycle Hire, and the maintenance of the capital's bus network. The plan also sets out an increased savings and efficiencies program, totalling £7.6 billion (US\$12 billion), up from around £5 billion (US\$8 billion).

"Despite an overall 8% reduction in TfL's overall spending power following last year's Government Spending Review; there will be an unprecedented upgrade of the transport network. Over the course of the Business Plan, which runs until 2014/15, TfL will deliver: transport for the London 2012 Olympic Games; a total of 4,000 traffic signals reviewed to reduce delays on the city's roads; the introduction of a lane rental scheme to cut unnecessary delays caused by road works, subject to support from the Government; the completion of all 12 Barclays Cycle Superhighways; the eastward extension of Barclays Cycle Hire scheme; and the Source London electric vehicle charging network.

"The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said, 'Through negotiations, savings and efficiencies we have done what many believed to be impossible. We have secured the greatest investment in London's transport network in 80 years, which will deliver Crossrail, the Tube upgrades, the completion of the London Overground network and the continuation of the cycling revolution, while protecting front line passenger and customer services. We will meet all of those challenges, while also ensuring we are as efficient and effective as we can be, through our £7.6bn savings program'. Part of the savings plan will include £375 million (US\$600 million) from efficiencies in IT systems and £290 million (US\$463 million) from renegotiating major contracts, including Congestion Charging and highway maintenance."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 31/3/11

Trees vs Speed Cameras

"Local authorities in rural areas are being urged to plant rows of trees, after a recent [UK] Department for Transport (DfT) study found that they are as effective as speed cameras in slowing down traffic. A trial in Norfolk found that creating an avenue of trees and hedges had a dramatic impact on motorists' behaviour. The experiment, at the four villages of Overstrand, Martham, Coltishall and Mundesley, showed that drivers dropped their speed because of the reduction of their peripheral vision. Overall there was a 20% drop in the number of motorists driving at 64 to 96km/h (40 to 60mph) and overall average speeds fell by 1.5%.



Photo: Traffic Technology Today

"The study also found that trees were seen as more suitable for the countryside than other traffic calming methods, which are used in towns and other urban areas. Parish

councils from the test area have told the DfT that the trees not only reduced speeding, but also softened the landscape. The UK's road safety minister, Mike Penning, hailed the trials. 'The success of Norfolk's road side tree planting scheme proves that it is possible to use imaginative solutions to cut speeding on rural roads leading into villages, rather than just resorting to cameras. I hope that other councils will be inspired by the success of this scheme and consider whether they might be able to use similar programs to reduce road casualties on their rural roads', he said. Andrew Howard, the AA's head of road safety, said drivers slowed down when they could see less of the road ahead. 'If visibility is too good, cars are more likely to overtake when it is not safe to do so. Poor visibility can lead to rear-end shunts, because drivers can't see the road ahead. Well planted trees can strike a happy medium'."

Ref: Traffic Technology Today, 11/3/11

And Also ...

"A New York fashion executive is suing his bosses. ... In a lawsuit, Thomas Horodecki, 36, alleges the smog, traffic and bad driving on his once-a-week commute sent him over the edge. 'It was the smog. It was depressing driving to [New] Jersey. The traffic was horrendous on Route 4, and they are pretty bad drivers'."

Ref: Daniel Bates, UK Daily Mail, 18/3/11

Light Rail for Perth?

"Pressure is mounting on the state government to commit to a light rail system in Perth's CBD after the opposition announced it could fully fund its proposal for a service between East and West Perth. Labor's plan is to use surplus money raised by the Perth parking levy to build a light rail network between the Causeway and Thomas Street in West Perth. After being announced this morning, it was described as a 'breakthrough' by Infrastructure Australia board member and Curtin University Professor Peter Newman. The proposed route would start near the WACA Ground and run along Hay Street, then divert to Murray Street before rejoining Hay Street at Havelock Street in West Perth, with a total of 10 stops.

Is a light rail system the answer to Perth's transport worries?

Yes: 80%
No: 20%
Votes: 834

**Ref:
WA Today
Poll, 20/4/11**

"Opposition transport spokesman Ken Travers said the 5.7-kilometre line would be a starting point, with extensions and possibly dual lines to be added in the future. The line is shorter than other mooted proposals, which connected the University of Western Australia and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, but this meant it could be built almost immediately as it would be fully funded using revenue raised from increases to CBD parking fees. The collected fees could only be spent within the Perth parking management area, which stretches from East Perth to West Perth.

"In November, Premier Colin Barnett appeared to support the ongoing push for light rail to meet increasing public transport demands when he said he would build a line servicing the inner suburbs and the CBD within the next decade. ... Professor Newman said the government had been trumped by the opposition and there was now little room to argue that a light rail line could not be built. 'The key thing is not the route, it's the fact that a funding source has been found to get started and that's a real breakthrough', Professor Newman said. ... 'Once we've got the first few kilometres of track [a more comprehensive system] will take off. 'It's about time there was a coherent response from the state government'.

"The Department of Transport is understood to be working on a proposal for a light rail network between Curtin University and the University of Western Australia, travelling through the CBD. The route through the city would either be along Murray Street and Adelaide Terrace, or Hay Street-St Georges Terrace-Adelaide Terrace. Labor estimates its light rail system would cost \$258 million to construct and purchase rolling stock, with an annual operating cost of \$8 million. The Perth parking levy would have a surplus of about \$90 million by June 2014, Opposition leader Eric Ripper said. The rest of the initial costs would be borrowed unless the federal government supported the project. The parking levy also would cover operating costs."

Ref: Courtney Trenwith, WA Today, 19/4/11

Brisbane's Busy Buses

"March [2011] was the worst month on record for overcrowding on Brisbane buses, with more than 200 buses a day filled to capacity."

Ref: Daniel Hurst, Brisbane Times, 20/5/11

"This is only during peak hours. Other times, the buses are empty. We should introduce [staggered] working hours."

"Buses could be used to form a Toronto (or Perth)-style high frequency feeder system taking people from their front door directly into the subway. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) can also be operated out of train stations. This will free up hundreds and hundreds of buses per hour to massively boost frequency in the suburbs where high frequency and capacity is most needed. It would also massively boost capacity. The current underutilised QR train system can also be upgraded to act more like a Metro."

"A bus system has its limits, it looks like we should be considering metro-frequency light rail on some of these highly used routes. The congestion on Coro Drive since the removal of the bus lane doesn't help either."

"Every day I see buses go past and their roofs are totally empty. People seem determined to just ride on the inside. You would not get this sort of snobbery happening in modern countries like India. C'mon people, swallow your pride, and climb aboard..... the roof."

Ref: Readers' Comments, Brisbane Times, 20/5/11

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/bus-overcrowding-worse-than-ever-20110519-1eupf.html?comments=18#comments>

Which form of [Brisbane] public transport is most in need of more investment?

Buses:	38%
Trains:	49%
Ferries:	1%
Paths:	5%
Roads:	7%
Votes:	316

**Ref:
Brisbane Times
Poll, 20/5/11**

Considering Equity in Transport (Pt 5)

"Transport, traffic and civic engineering decisions that are clearly subject the Act include equity considerations in the following circumstances:

- traffic studies;
- road reservations;
- patterns of subdivision in new estates;
- road renewal and redesign;
- elements which impact or facilitate pedestrian traffic including the installation of crossovers across footpaths, modification to kerb ramps, selection of and installation of street trees, seats and other poles;
- elements which impact or facilitate cycling traffic including single and priority lanes and traffic lights;
- light phasing;
- pedestrian crossing positioning;
- disability parking ratios and placement;
- • installation of tow away zones in particular locations;
- removing or not providing parking from the front of shops or schools , or doctors or community centres, or allocating parking differentially;
- road widening;
- streetscaping, improvements and modification;
- installation of transport amenity including bus shelters, time tables; and
- road reservation making;

"However the process for making decisions about roads and road corridors is subject to a range of other legislation frameworks as well.

All planning decisions in Victoria are subject to the provisions of the Planning and Environment Act (Vic) 1987. At times environmental considerations trigger decision making under processes prescribed under Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Decisions about road and transport planning determined under the Planning and Environment Act [1987] are also subject to legislation governing decisions taken about transport infrastructure. These include:

- road corridor reservations

- road and transport network plans of subdivisions, bus route approval in plans of subdivisions, and
- strategic plans where they impact on or influence transport planning and provision
- bus routes, and timetabling.” {Continued in #209}

Ref: Carmel Boyce, 19/4/11

For the full article and the notes contact: Carmel@equityjusticeaccess.com

Trinidad - The Road Not Built

“Most Americans love roads: Ours is a country of roads with a network of highways that rivals any other. So too does the US government love roads. When the Obama administration passed its epic \$787 billion stimulus plan just weeks after taking office, where did much of the money go? Into fixing and upgrading our highways. When US aid agencies look to poorer nations, they too love to fund the building of roads that can deliver crops to markets and ports and bring ‘progress’ to remote areas. After all, who could be against a road?”

“In our stay in Trinidad and Tobago, the two-island nation off the coast of Venezuela, we discover that more people than we expected are opposed to a particular road. Their reasons turn the prevailing view of progress on its head and add to our understanding of rooted communities. ... Near Matelot, we meet Michael Aviles ... located east of where the road ends. He is a former senator who grows his own basic food crops and was a key leader of the most recent fight against the road. Michael laments that the central government in Port of Spain has historically been filled with people with an ‘oil and gas mentality’ – with top officials disparaging those opposing the road as being against ‘progress’ and wanting ‘to protect the little green frog and the little green leaf’. On the other hand, he tells us how, at a local level, the anti-road campaign convinced each of the village councils in the area to sign a petition of opposition, which was brought to the Environment Minister. ...

“Still, Michael reflects, changing mindsets is not easy. ‘People in government asked me: What’s the alternative to the road? I said: “No road is the alternative.”’ Roads, we conclude, can connect communities and people and are often a good thing. But as we have learned in Trinidad, they are not always the right choice socially, environment-ally, or even economically. And this is hardly just a Trinidad tale: Across the globe, in places including the Philippines, Brazil, and Guyana, roads have provided access to loggers, leading to the destruction of the forest. In the United States there is now a rethinking about our vast network of roads. Many believe that a key to transforming the US economy is shifting from the highway economy built over the past century to a network of high-speed trains that could help make the country less dependent on fossil fuels, and therefore less vulnerable. Sometimes the road not built is the best way for real connections to occur, the best path to real ‘progress’.”

Ref: Robin Broad and John Cavanagh, Yes Magazine, 23/5/11

www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/john-cavanagh-and-robin-broad/the-road-not-built-redefining-progress-at-home-and-abroad

Walk Lightly

“Go for a walk and help power your town or city. That could happen soon on the streets, according to a UK inventor who says a paving stone in a busy area is stepped on by more than 50,000 pedestrians every day. To harness that power, young graduate Laurence Kembell-Cook came up with the idea of the energy-harvesting floor tile he calls Pavegen. It is the first device of its kind to capture this energy and transform it into electricity. When fitted in heavily pedestrianised areas it can power street lights and bus shelters, providing localised energy independence.

“Pavegen is celebrating a contract for the massive Westfield shopping centre on the site of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games as well as its first permanent installation in a school walkway. Some seven million people are expected to walk through Westfield in the two weeks of the 2012 Games and all of them will step on Pavegen tiles. The tiles are made of 100% recycled rubber from old tyres. Every time someone steps on one, it flexes a dynamo technology that stores the kinetic energy produced. The tile glows to show pedestrians they are creating power. The footfall energy could power street lighting, information signage and other applications that spring into life when people approach them. The tiles can be used almost anywhere. Pupils at a boys' school in Canterbury, southern England, are now lighting up a corridor simply by walking through it. And the Pavegen tiles will also help the Olympic site's Westfield shopping centre to meet its stringent targets for environmental sustainability, making it one of the greenest shopping arenas.

"Laurence Kemball-Cook, a Loughborough University graduate set up a company in 2009 (<http://www.pavegen.co.uk/>). The product has won awards from the UK's Technology Strategy Board and the Chartered Institute of Builders and has been described by UK Science Minister David Willetts as a 'great example of British innovation'. ... The device won first place in the Innovation Future Zone competition at Ecobuild 2010, the world's biggest event for sustainable design, construction and the built environment...

"Flexing just five millimetres, the Pavegen slabs absorb the kinetic energy produced by every footstep, creating 4-10 watts of electricity. The energy is stored in the slabs in a battery for up to three days or distributed to nearby street lights, information displays and even electrical appliances such as computers and fridges. The energy generated from five slabs can illuminate a bus-stop throughout the night and, with heavy use, a Pavegen installation could pay for itself within two years, with each slab targeted to have a five-year lifespan. The technology is suitable for indoor use and Pavegen is finalising the design for the outdoor units.

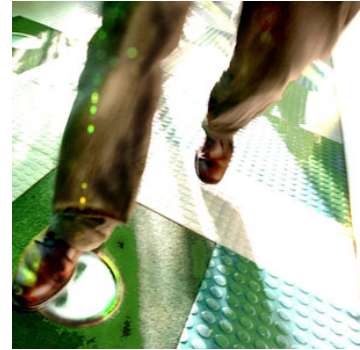


Photo: Eco Voice

"Only five per cent of the footfall energy goes to the low-energy LED lamp to make the tile glow, while the remaining 95% powers the tile's environs. Constructed from marine grade stainless steel and recycled materials, the rubber surface is available in various colours and the internal components are made from recycled aluminium.

- Each slab generates 2.1 watt per hour when located in an area with high footfall - based on a hit rate of a footstep every 4-10 seconds.
- Testing at trial sites has shown that five hours of walking at peak time will generate enough power to illuminate a bus stop for 12 hours or more.
- Energy is stored within lithium polymer batteries, depending on functionality of system."

Ref: Richard Maino, Eco Voice, 1/6/11

www.ecovoice.com.au/eco-news/3318-human-power-generates-new-business-energy

More on the Carbon Tax

"Regarding the misnamed 'Carbon Tax' (I think they are referring to Carbon Dioxide) and the industries it will apply to – rail, both freight and public transport, will effectively be subject to the tax through the addition of fuel excise, whilst road transport will remain exempt – thus, in my opinion, to describe this as an attempt to reduce emissions is false, and the structure at present penalizes more efficient transport (rail and shipping) over less efficient (road and air), at least until 2014.

"The Australasian Railway Association estimates that this tax will impose a \$100m annual cost burden on the rail industry – a pure cost which will be passed on to customers and which cannot be avoided."

Alex Pout, 18/7/11

See the table: 'Treatment of Transport Fuels' at: www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au/clean-energy-future/securing-a-clean-energy-future/chapter-3-putting-a-price-on-carbon-pollution/

Economic Effect of Rail Trail Cycling

"Dr Sue Beeton is an Associate Professor in Tourism at La Trobe University, where she has undertaken a variety of research projects on tourism and recreation on public land and its impact on local communities. In 2003 Dr Beeton undertook the first study on the economic effect of Rail Trail cycling on local communities, looking at three trails in Victoria. She has repeated this study twice more at three year periods for the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, which is the most developed of the Rail Trails, providing a rare longitudinal study. Over this period, the average spending of visitors to the Trail has increased to \$244 per day in 2009, along with a growth in local facilities for cyclists and the community, along with additional entrepreneurial opportunities. This compares favourably with the average spending of \$159 per day for overall tourists in the region. As Dr Beeton notes, 'The high level of spending refutes the belief that cyclists are 'budget travellers' who leave little in the local communities through which they cycle'." See Events for 21/7/11

Ref: Darebin BUG email, 18/7/11

Carmageddon in LA?

"A 16-kilometre stretch of Interstate 405 – a vital artery that links population centres north and south of the Santa Monica Mountains – is shutting down for 53 hours this weekend. The closure, a necessary part of a major highway reconstruction project, is being dubbed 'Carmageddon', evoking images of gridlock, road rage and other traffic nightmares that it might spawn in car-dependent Southern California. ... On a typical July weekend, about a half-million vehicles use the section of the freeway, known locally as the 405, to get to major destinations such as the airport, beaches and interchanges to other major highways. Transportation officials said a full shutdown is necessary to replace the 50-year-old Mulholland Bridge as part of a US\$1 billion project to widen a perpetually bottle-necked segment through the Sepulveda Pass. Authorities said a full closure was necessary to demolish one side of the span, and they picked this weekend to minimise impact to traffic on a work-day. They expect another closure next year to replace the other half. To discourage driving, transit officials will offer free rides on the subway and certain bus lines and add more train service."

Ref: AP, Herald-Sun, 15/7/11

"Crews finished demolition work on the bridge at about 7am toppling two massive pillars. About 3600 tonnes of concrete rubble was expected to be removed over the course of the job. ...



The Mulholland Bridge on Interstate 405

Photo: AFP, Herald-Sun, 15/7/11

But the fears of epic traffic jams dissipated with only light weekend traffic.

Officials said during the closure there were 65% fewer cars on freeways in the LA metro area, compared with normal weekend traffic. ... The project picked up its apocalyptic name when Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said at an early June news conference that 'this doesn't need to be a Carmageddon if people avoided driving'. ... Many mocked the frenzied language surrounding the closure: 'How's everyone coping with this terrifying apocalyptic nightmare of having to ... oh my god ... stay home with your family?!' Bill Maher wrote. Albert Brooks took a more philosophical approach in his Tweet: 'If we would close the freeways every weekend we would have a great society'."

Ref: AP, Herald-Sun, 18/7/11

And Also ...

"An angry Lamborghini owner has vented his frustration with the Italian brand by employing a team of sledgehammer-wielding men to destroy his car. The Chinese businessman was reportedly upset his circa \$650,000 Gallardo supercar still wasn't up to scratch following a service at an authorised mechanic – so he decided to have it smashed to pieces in protest."

Matt Campbell, SMH, 17/3/11

"So who is the winner here? Lamborghini has the \$650,000, and the Chinese businessman has a pile of twisted metal."

Reader's Comment, SMH, 17/3/11



Sledgehammers were used to destroy a \$650,000 Lamborghini Gallardo in China

Source: Jalopnik's Facebook