

Australian High Speed Rail Study

"The [Federal] Labor Government has taken the first step towards progressing the vision of a modern, high speed rail network connecting two-thirds of Australians and providing a new foundation for a low carbon, high productivity economy. ... Based on this preliminary work, an eastern seaboard network connecting Brisbane to Melbourne via Sydney and a range of regional centres is expected to:

- *Cost between \$61 billion and \$108 billion to build and involve laying more than 1,600 kilometres of new standard-gauge, double-track.*
- *Achieve speeds of up 350 kilometres per hour and offer journey times as low as 3 hours from Sydney to Brisbane, and just 40 minutes from Sydney to Newcastle.*
- *Carry around 54 million passengers a year by 2036 including, for example, about half those who would have flown between Sydney and Melbourne – currently the world's fifth busiest air corridor.*
- *Offer competitive ticket prices, with one way fares from Brisbane to Sydney costing \$75–\$177; Sydney to Melbourne \$99–\$197; and \$16.50 for daily commuters between Newcastle and Sydney.*
- *Cut carbon pollution, with emissions per passenger a third of what a car emits and each full train – 450 passengers – equivalent to taking 128 cars off the road. ...*



"For many Australians, high speed rail would be an attractive alternative. ... Indeed, for individuals as well as the wider community the potential benefits of this technology are hard to ignore. It could better integrate our regional and metropolitan communities, ease congestion on our roads and at our airports, and substantially reduce carbon pollution."

Ref: Anthony Albanese, Federal Media Release, 4/8/11

For a full copy of the Stage One report: www.infrastructure.gov.au/rail/trains/high_speed/index.aspx

"This is old-fashioned decentralisation with vast social benefits – and benefits for the nation. Many of the nightmares of suburban sprawl in Sydney and Melbourne could be exported to areas further into the country. Of course, that creates new problems ('challenges' in modern political-speak), but looks to me like a net benefit, compared with the present. But, if we're going to do it, it can't be a free-money festival, especially since it's ours. It has to be competitively price or we'll saddle our children and theirs with a costly hangover."

Ref: Clive Dorman, The Age, 8/8/11

"Fast rail has a place but how about more slow rail first to take up the task of hauling goods which is vital to our economy? It's like we are children wanting the latest and greatest before we ask what we actually need. For the same costings we could put so much more lines and linkages and stock to get what we have working properly."

Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 8/8/11



Indicative Costs (of Capital Expenditure only)

Ref: Federal Government Media Release, 4/8/11

Christchurch Planning (Part 1)

Following my recent trip to Christchurch, New Zealand, I was asked to write a Perspective piece for the Christchurch Press that was published under the heading: *Transport – a critical planning factor*.

"It will be hard for anyone in midst of social upheaval caused by continuing earthquake aftershocks to contemplate another upheaval but how Christchurch responds to the present crisis will have a crucial bearing in the way it copes with the inevitable rise in the price of oil. I last visited Christchurch in June 2011 as part of an investigation into post-disaster planning. The timing was somewhat premature, for as we soon discovered the aftershocks were still in progress, but we found an admirable spirit, determination and capability to rebuild the city. One comment that emerged from our research interviews was the tedium of the word 'opportunity' in relation to reconstruction. But the reality is – which is not lost on many of the citizens and civic leaders – this is the occasion to make the decisions to rebuild a better city.

"There is a parallel in the aftermath of the 1947 Ballantynes' fire¹ where that tragedy resulted in building regulations and drills that have probably saved thousands of lives in New Zealand and abroad. In the same way the current reconstruction provides the chance to rebuild a more sustainable city – and transport is a critical factor in realizing this aspiration. Any debate about transport will become mired in the pros and cons of the various modes, influenced by people's perceptions and knowledge, and complicated by the paradoxes in transport planning – what can seem to be an obviously good idea can often be counterproductive. It is however crucial to understand the issues and have a rational debate based on evidence and what is good for the city as a whole rather than self-interest. The formula for good cities, for good urban spaces, is well understood, the surprise is how rarely we chose to adopt it.

"The first issue is that most people don't perceive that there is a problem as long as they can easily get from A to B in a reasonable time. The costs and consequences – pollution, congestion, road trauma – of car dependence are barely a factor. For most people the car is a useful tool, one we take almost for granted – but consider what happens when fuel becomes unaffordable particularly in a country so dependent on imported oil.

"The second issue is that typically cars shape cities in a negative way. Walking and cycling are difficult alongside busy roadways as are recreational activities like street cafes and play areas. The question is: who should have preference in a neighbourhood, be it a residential or commercial area, the people who live and/or work there or those passing through? Then there is the value of land.

"Cars (and car-dominated cities) take up a lot of space. Is it wise to allocate so much on-road space or even private space, in for example shopping malls, to car parking? Many shopping malls have much more parking space than they would normally ever need – designed this way to give the impression to passing motorists that there is ample parking. Yet the extent of those parking lots forms a barrier to those who might want to walk in from the street. (I understand that some shopping malls are taking advantage of the earthquake to appropriate even more parking space from nearby damaged buildings)." {Continued in #212}

Ref: Stephen Inghouille, Christchurch Press, 29/7/11



A typical Christchurch shopping mall. The family pictured in the centre made their way from the street.

Photo Stephen Inghouille, June 2011

¹ Christchurch department store fire, the worst in New Zealand's history, resulting in the deaths of 41 staff.

Europe's Parking U-Turn

"European cities are reaping the rewards of innovative parking policies, including revitalized town centres; big reductions in car use; drops in air pollution and rising quality of urban life, according to Europe's Parking U-Turn: From Accommodation to Regulation, published by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy. The report examines European parking over the last half century, through the prism of ten European cities. It found:

- *"Parking is increasingly linked to public transport. Amsterdam, Paris, Zurich and Strasbourg limit how much parking is allowed in new developments based on how far it is to walk to a bus, tram or metro stop. Zurich has made significant investments in new tram and bus lines while making parking more expensive and less convenient. As a result, between 2000 and 2005, the share of public transit use went up by 7%, while the share of cars in traffic declined by 6%.*
- *"European cities are ahead of the rest of the world in charging rational prices for on-street parking. In Paris, the on-street parking supply has been reduced by more than 9% since 2003, and of the remaining stock, 95% is paid parking. The result, along with other transport infrastructure improvements, has been a 13% decrease in driving.*
- *"Parking reforms are becoming more popular than congestion charging. While London, Stockholm, and a few other European cities have managed to implement congestion charging, more are turning to parking. Parking caps have been set in Zurich and Hamburg's business districts to freeze the existing supply, where access to public transport is easiest.*
- *"Revenue gathered from parking tariffs is being invested to support other mobility needs. In Barcelona, 100% of revenue goes to operate 'Bicing' – the city's public bike system. Several boroughs in London use parking revenue to subsidize transit passes for seniors and the disabled, who ride public transit for free.*

"Walter Hook, Executive Director of ITDP, commented: 'This report shows that European cities lead the world in using parking as a tool to revitalize their cities'. The ten cities featured are Amsterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona, Copenhagen, London, Munich, Paris, Stockholm, Strasbourg and Zurich."

Ref: ITDP Media Release, 19/1/11

www.itdp.org/documents/European_Parking_U-Turn.pdf

Comparing Cities (Part 3)

"Urban planners generally agree that a rise in car commuting is not desirable for cities anywhere. Andy Fellmann calculated that a person using a car took up 115 cubic meters (roughly 4,000 cubic feet) of urban space in Zurich while a pedestrian took three. 'So it's not really fair to everyone else if you take the car', he said. European cities also realized they could not meet increasingly strict World Health Organization guidelines for fine-particulate air pollution if cars continued to reign. Many American cities are likewise in 'non-attainment' of their Clean Air Act requirements, but that fact 'is just accepted here', said Michael Kodransky of the New York-based transportation institute. It often takes extreme measures to get people out of their cars, and providing good public transportation is a crucial first step. One novel strategy in Europe is intentionally making it harder and more costly to park. 'Parking is everywhere in the United States, but it's disappearing from the urban space in Europe', said Mr. Kodransky, whose recent report 'Europe's Parking U-Turn' surveys the shift. ...

"In Copenhagen, Peder Jensen, at the European Environment Agency, said that his office building had more than 150 spaces for bicycles and only one for a car, to accommodate a disabled person. While many building codes in Europe cap the number of parking spaces in new buildings to discourage car ownership, American codes conversely tend to stipulate a minimum number. New apartment complexes built along the light rail line in Denver devote their bottom eight floors to parking, making it 'too easy' to get in the car rather than take advantage of rail transit, Mr. Kodransky said. While Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg has generated controversy in New York by 'pedestrianising' a few areas like Times Square, many European cities have already closed vast areas to car traffic. Store owners in Zurich had worried that the closings would mean a drop in business, but that fear has proved unfounded, Mr. Fellmann said, because pedestrian traffic increased 30 to 40% where cars were banned. With politicians and most citizens still largely behind them, Zurich's planners continue their traffic-taming quest, shortening the green-light periods and lengthening the red with the goal that pedestrians wait no more than 20

seconds to cross. 'We would never synchronize green lights for cars with our philosophy', said Pio Marzolini, a city official. 'When I'm in other cities, I feel like I'm always waiting to cross a street. I can't get used to the idea that I am worth less than a car'."

Ref: Elisabeth Rosenthal, NY Times, 26/6/11

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/science/earth/27traffic.html?src=ISMR_AP_LO_MST_FB

Australian Fast Train Debate (Part 2)

"For at least two decades the conventional wisdom has held that Australia's main population centres were too small and too far apart for a high-speed rail system to be viable. And that is probably still the case. But the economics of high-speed rail relative to other modes of transport are likely to change over the next decade or two, in ways that ought to prompt state and federal government policymakers to give serious thought to the role high-speed rail might play over the same time horizon that informs the government's Intergenerational Reports. First, the cost of congestion of our road networks is high and rising. Last year's State of Australian Cities report cited estimates from the former Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics that the avoidable cost of congestion in Australian capitals would rise from \$9.4 billion in 2005 to \$20.4 billion by 2020. This increase could be moderated by getting at least some inter-capital people and freight movements off the roads.

"Second, the competitiveness of high-speed rail relative to air travel is likely to increase. The rising cost of jet fuel, the increasing congestion and resulting delays at airports, the increasing amounts of time wasted by airport security rituals, and the inability to use laptop computers and hand-held electronic devices for much of the time spent on aircraft all heighten the potential attractiveness of high-speed train travel as an alternative to flying between the cities on Australia's eastern seaboard.

Potential of a high-speed rail link?

Great Idea:	83%
Not Sold:	1%
Won't Happen:	16%
Votes:	26,104
Ref:	Age Poll 4/8/11

"Third, the drive to reduce carbon emissions is likely to increase the attractiveness and, depending on how we price carbon and our ability to generate 'clean' electricity, the economics of high-speed rail relative to air travel and long-distance road transport. Finally, emerging trends in high-speed rail technology in Europe are beginning to undermine the conventional wisdom that has informed this debate in Australia over the past two decades. For example, the Spanish AVE system now runs from Barcelona via Madrid to Seville, a distance of just over 900 kilometres, compared with just over 700 kilometres from Melbourne via Canberra to Sydney, and serving cities with a similar combined population of about 8 million. The economics of high-speed rail don't stack up right now. But there's an increasing probability they will within the next 20 years. It would be foolish to wait until then to begin investigating the possibilities."

Ref: Saul Eslake, The Age, 30/4/11

The True Value of Rail

"The Australasian Railway Association [argues that] there would be major economic and greenhouse savings from expanding passenger and freight rail. The association's study, 'The True Value of Rail', completed by Access Economics, finds that one passenger train takes 525 cars off the road and reduces road travel by 3.2 million vehicle kilometres a year. One passenger train also reduces road accident costs equivalent to 130 hospital admissions and, in just one year, reduces carbon emissions by the same amount as planting 320 hectares of trees."

Ref: Andrew West and Jacob Saulwick, The Age, 2/8/11

"NSW Greens MP and transport spokesperson Cate Faehrmann says high speed rail will be a vital component of preparing for oil depletion and rapidly escalating petrol prices, due by the end of the decade. ... 'Providing a lower emissions and sustainable alternative to air travel should be an infrastructure priority for NSW as well as the Commonwealth', said Ms Faehrmann. ... 'The seemingly high cost of high speed rail is insignificant when you consider the billions we have spent, and will continue to spend, on motorways in the coming decades. Premier O'Farrell needs to get behind high speed rail in a big way to give it the best possible chance of being built quickly and efficiently. ... 'The Premier's new infrastructure body, Infrastructure NSW, should make high speed rail a cornerstone of its 20 year infrastructure strategy'."

Ref: NSW Greens Media Release, 4/8/11

And Also ... David & Fast Trains

"Michelangelo's statue of David is at risk of being toppled by the construction of a high-speed railway line beneath Florence because of his flimsy ankles. The statue is riddled with tiny cracks, particularly in the ankles of the boy warrior, and could collapse as a result of vibrations from the 1.4 billion euro project, which is due to start in the summer. ... The 17ft high statue was already under intense strain because of vibrations caused by the 1.5 million tourists who troop through Florence's Accademia Gallery each year to see the work, and due to traffic in the streets surrounding the building. ... Florence is in a region of Italy which is prone to earthquakes and has a recorded history of more than 120 tremors, although none reached more than five on the Richter scale."

Ref: Nick Squires, UK Telegraph, 4/3/11

Peak Cars (Part 3)

"Peter Newman: *The interview with Fatih Birol that you did on The Science Show was extraordinary because I have been talking about peak oil since the early '70s and it has been very hard to actually get anyone to say those words and to actually recognise...*

"Robyn Williams: *He is from the International Energy Agency in Paris, yes.*

"Peter Newman: *Extraordinary thing to have an economist who has seen this and is deeply concerned. He has come out. And this is what we have been looking for, for some time. I hope that the rest of our city governance mechanisms can begin to adapt and see that this is a fundamental change to our cities that needs to be taken on board because ordinary people are seeing it, and it was one of the major factors in causing the GFC because the poorer people living on the extremes of American cities couldn't pay their mortgages anymore when the price of fuel tripled. Now we are seeing it in a more structural way, it's just always going to get higher, and there could be some extremes, there could be cuts. We're facing a world now where oil needs to be phased out, and that is a message that seeps through and is now I think being seen in the numbers on the amount of car use that we are picking up.*

"Robyn Williams: *How are you seeing that change actually amongst our neighbours in Asia, because you are consulting them in many cities, Asian cities. Are they actually doing something about that or just wringing their hands?*

"Peter Newman: *I think they are really doing something. The concern about the future is one thing that you do need to address these major issues of climate change and oil. But there is another thing driving it. They get a sense of the longer term future and they want to get there quickly, they want to leapfrog the problems that we have had in the West, and one of the problems is the car in cities. You've got a number of people in academic positions and in government that I have found who are saying we really have to avoid this one.*

"Robyn Williams: *In which countries?*

"Peter Newman: *In China, in India in particular. I've seen it in Singapore of course, that's one of the cities that many of these countries are going to for their advice, not coming to Australia, they want to avoid that. But they are coming to people like me who have consistently said car dependence is a problem and our cities need to be clearly part of the green economy but they need to be liveable cities that people can walk around and really enjoy being part of. And cars have really wrecked the street life of many of these cities. It is pretty obvious. So that is one of the motivations that I am picking up and why I'm getting asked to go to Japan and China and India to help in the building of the next phase of their cities.*

"Robyn Williams: *Finally, in this country, in Australia, is it obvious to all sides of politics or is it still partisan, a question of individual freedom and left-wing/right-wing politics, as far as you can see?*

"Peter Newman: *I have been looking for the bipartisan approach and I find it at times but it is difficult. The reaction that sets in by the conservative side of politics, that 'nobody, especially somebody in a university, is going to tell me to get out of my car', that is pretty clear. And they think that the old world will continue, no matter what, I mean, 'it's not a bad world so let's just stick with it'. Well, that's conservatism in general. The reality is that the economy will begin to decline unless we make these*

changes. That's now a great reality, so we have to get bipartisan approaches. I'm confident that the New South Wales government will actually do the building of the rail systems that Labor said they would and then pulled out of and in many ways lost the election because of that. We have been waiting nearly three years for the public transport plan to come out in Perth with the conservative government there, and it is a good plan but it's one that hasn't seen the light of day. So we wonder if the conservative forces aren't winning there. It is really time to face up to the fact that conservative and progressive politics needs to see that the physical determinants of our future are there; oil is running out, climate change is happening, people are moving back into cities and they are not wanting to be as car dependent as they were."

Ref: ABC Radio National, Science Show, 5/5/11

www.abc.net.au/rn/scienceshow/stories/2011/3206293.htm

"The underlying problems with Sydney's transport have been well known for over a century, moreover the city's systemic failure to solve them means there's little chance of a solution anytime soon. If Prof. Newman has an answer, then it must involve the resurrection of John Whitton, father of NSW railways, who over about 30 years in the 1800s, built 4500km of railway. In the last 110 or so years, no one else has achieved even one hundredth of that amount."

Ref: Grahame Wilson, Listener's Comment, ABC Radio National, Science Show, 5/5/11

www.abc.net.au/rn/scienceshow/stories/2011/3206293.htm

Considering Equity in Transport (Pt 6) *"Although the process for gathering information on equity should remain fairly consistent across decisions, every decision maker has the right to determine the method, level and process for each decision, and of reporting these considerations. This must be transparent. In other jurisdictions and countries equity considerations are explicitly considered in Equality Impact Assessments. In the UK Equality Impact Assessments are a tool to ensure public authorities make sure their policies and the way they carry out their policies do what they are intended to do and for everybody. Equality Impact Assessments are tools to address the impact of a policy on equity and diversity objectives. For instance where a road was in an area with a high proportion of elderly residents, an Equity Impact Assessment would consider whether the proposal took into account the needs of that population. The Equality and Human Rights Commission of the UK has issued guidance on integrating Equality Impact Assessments into policymaking and Review. In the UK these are regularly undertaken in all agencies from the UK Cabinet Office.*

"Instructions on Equality Impact Assessments in the UK include that they:

- *give due regard to proportionality and relevance;*
- *should be an integral part of policy development;*
- *are not just about addressing discrimination or adverse impact but also positively promoting equal opportunities, improved access, participation in public life and good relations.*

Equality Impact Assessments provide an evidence base for transparent decision making.

UK Guidance Notes refer to the relationship between Equity Impact Assessments and other impact Assessments. Equity Impact Assessments should be considered at the same time and to an equal extent.

"In line with these instructions, transport providers in the UK undertake Equality Impact Assessments in respect of transport decision making including:

- *Transport for London*
- *The Borough of Islington*
- *City of Bristol*

"There has been no guidance notes issued on

Equity Impact Assessment for Transport providers in Victoria to date. There are however guidance notes on the implementation of the Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities for Public bound by the act.

"Each Council and Public Authority is required to have implemented a system of assessment and reporting against the Charter in all decisions. As a consequence of the Transport Integration Act and its incorporation into the Planning and Environment Act, all decisions relating to

Transport, whether the are seen to be Planning decisions, or Engineering decisions, should also be reported against the Charter. Depending on the level of the decision and the Impact assessment is likely to occur at a number of levels. For instance a proposal for a program of works and schedule to build pram ramps in particular locations built to standard, at an intersection where there were previously none existed might be consistent with obligations to the Charter as they improve access of less able, younger people, people with family responsibilities and in some instances. This might be reported as a program consistent action against the budget allocation. However a plan of subdivision submitted by a developer might require Council to assess Equity. This might be facilitated by a level a level of work in a development submission that directly addressed equity, or the provision of an independent and specialist report on equity considerations relating to the plan.

"All Local Governments and authorities caught by the Transport Integration Act would be required to have a transparent process to ensure equity considerations were taken into account in decision making processes." {Continued # #212}

Ref: Carmel Boyce, 19/4/11 Note that this article is continued from #208. For the full article and the notes contact carmel@equityjusticeaccess.com

And Also ...

"BMW says cars will soon be able to calculate whether it's better to drive to work or take public transport. The car of the future could recommend that you take the bus or the train instead of driving."

Ref: Richard Blackburn, The Age, 2/8/11

"How will you be able to tell if the car is just being lazy?"

Ref: Reader's Comment, The Age, 2/8/11



"A little touch of the cattle prod fixes that."